THE 85TH ANNUAL RING AWARDS

P.38

THE BIBLE OF BOXING

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FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

ADONIS STEVENSON
FINDS STARDOM IN 2013

OUT OF THE USSR

BOXERS FROM FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS ARE WINNING FANS IN THE U.S.

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OUNG BRIT LAMENTS
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WOMEN'S AWARDS

JESSICA 'KIKA' CHAVEZ OF MEXICO WINS THE RING'S TOP PRIZE

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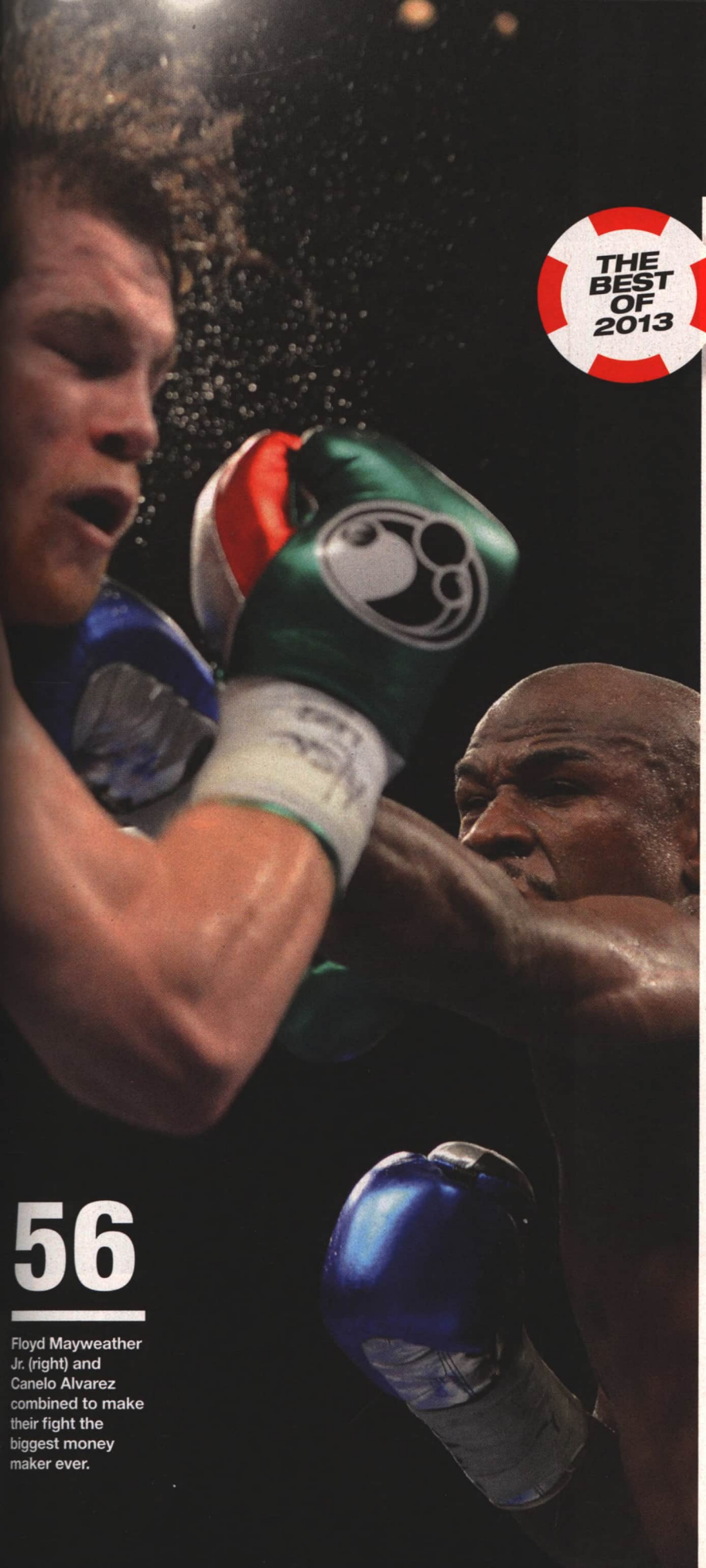

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Floyd Mayweather Jr. (right) and Canelo Alvarez combined to make their fight the biggest money maker ever.

THE BEST OF 2013

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Carl Froch had good reason to celebrate after his victory over George Groves. Now he should grant Groves a rematch.

The RING

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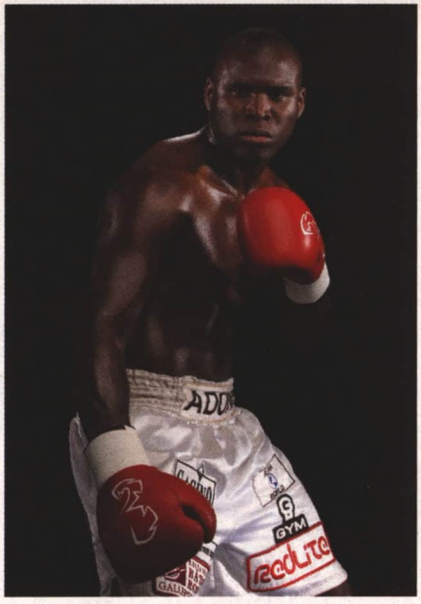
By **Michael Rosenthal**



A TOUGH CHOICE

Sometimes the process of determining the RING Fighter of the Year is easy. Sometimes it's hard. This year, it was the latter.

Arguments could be made for a number of candidates, including (in alphabetical order) Timothy Bradley, Danny Garcia, Gennady Golovkin, Sergey Kovalev, Floyd Mayweather Jr., Guillermo Rigondeaux and Adonis Stevenson.

Bradley bounced back from the negative fallout after his controversial victory over Manny Pacquiao to have a splendid year, proving in a war with Ruslan Provodnikov that he could win a brutal test of wills and then outboxing Juan Manuel Marquez.

Garcia confounded the critics again by outpointing the fearsome Lucas Matthysse, which followed a victory over veteran Zab Judah. "Swift" just knows how to win.

Golovkin continued his rise to stardom, knocking out all four of his opponents in what was a common theme in 2013.

Kovalev followed Golovkin's lead, stopping all four opponents he faced – including the capable but ultimately overwhelmed Gabriel Campillo and Nathan Cleverly – to emerge as a major player at 175 pounds.

Mayweather fought twice in one year for the first time since 2007. As usual, he was untouchable. He badly outclassed Robert Guerrero and then did the same to Canelo Alvarez in the biggest fight in years, demonstrating again that it will take a special boxer to test him.

Rigondeaux might or might not be pleasing to watch but no one can question his remarkable ability, as he embarrassed pound-for-pounder Nonito Donaire and then shut out Joseph Agbeko. He had a special year.

And, finally, there's Stevenson, who also knocked out each of his four opponents in 2013. He started the year by stopping Darnell Boone to avenge his only loss, stunned the boxing world by putting Chad Dawson away with one punch only 76 seconds into their fight to win the RING light heavyweight title and then stopped both former titleholder Tavoris Cloud and contender Tony Bellew to close out his year.

So who wins?

In the end, the RING Editorial Board decided after much discussion that Stevenson's 2013 resume was the most impressive.

The Haitian-born Canadian had one of the two or three most impressive victories of the year (the knockout of the No. 1 175-pounder in the world), avenged his only defeat and then dominated two more respected opponents.

Again, strong arguments can be made for the other candidates. THE RING editors just felt that Stevenson accomplished a little more than the rest.

The fists of Marcos Maidana (right) found the head of Adrien Broner more times than anyone could've imagined beforehand.

Keith Thurman (right) brought tremendous intensity and impressive all-around skills to bear in a dominating victory over Jesus Soto Karass.

The quick, slick Paulie Malignaggi (right) had no trouble beating a listless Zab Judah in the Battle of Brooklyn.

COME OUT WRITING

Some fans appreciate Guillermo Rigondeaux for what he is.

SWEET SCIENTIST

Boxing at its finest is pure science of hit and don't get hit. Nowadays violence is rewarded over skills; networks love it when fights are brutal and reward those fighters with future dates. Boxers like Guillermo Rigondeaux are labeled not exciting enough and casual fans are turned off. But if you turn down the volume and just watch him do his thing, man, it's pure amazing talent. You can see his opponent slowly taking fewer and fewer chances because he is being outboxed and outclassed. Not every fight needs to end with a KO or someone being rushed to the hospital. Once in a lifetime you get an all-time great like Floyd Mayweather Jr. or Pernell Whitaker who truly has the skill set to be called a pure boxer. Guillermo has it. Enjoy it people.

Julio Seda
San Diego

I think that Guillermo Rigondeaux is the No. 2 pound-for-pound fighter in the world, behind only Floyd Mayweather Jr. I also think that watching him fight is an exciting display of the art of boxing at its best. It is disconcerting that he is so underappreciated.

Adam Wynant
Las Vegas

THE PROBLEM'S PROBLEMS

The keys to victory for Adrien Broner against a devastating puncher like Marcos Maidana were very simple: Broner needed to come out from the first bell and shoot his jab. The only way to keep a pure puncher on his heels and unable to land a solid punch is to shoot your jab and keep him at bay. Broner abandoned his jab, allowing a fighter who doesn't use the punch much to outjab him. Broner also showed no footwork, no head movement, no ring generalship, and his defense left a great deal to be desired. He allowed Maidana to stand in front of him and hit him at will. This fight showed me that Broner does not have what it takes to fight the elite. He doesn't seem to carry his power at welterweight, and he doesn't seem to have the ability to adjust when he is faced with adversity.

Muslimah McLendon
Edison, N.J.

Witnessing a loud-mouthed, cocky, arrogant bastard like Adrien "The Problem" Broner get beat the way he did, I am sorry to say, is one of the greatest feelings I ever had. Broner's karma was well deserved; he can refuse to learn from it, or he can come back better. Congrats to "El Chino." He made my weekend. I know Marcos is a hero to many people now. We all live vicariously through his success.

Errol Acosta
Oceanside, Calif.

While the Showtime boxing crew and Adrien Broner were trying hard to keep the image of him being the next Floyd Mayweather Jr. alive, Marcos Maidana discovered Broner was more like Andre Berto. No slight to Berto, but Broner is aggressive, fast and easy to hit too. The good news for fans is that Broner will make for action packed fights that Mayweather will never provide because of his defense-first mentality.

Jim Wayland

Like many, I was quite disgusted with the classless ring antics of Adrien Broner during his recent beatdown at the hands of Marcos Maidana. From his overzealous and cocky ring walk, the excessive taunting of his opponent during the introductions, and the mock humping of his opponent at the end of the first round, Broner got what he deserved. As a lifelong boxing fan, I have been fortunate to witness many great champions who recognized the importance of representing themselves with dignity and class. Who can forget the great Alexis Arguello consoling and encouraging an overmatched Ray Mancini after their title fight in 1981. Even a sometimes-vulgar Roberto Duran had more class in his pinky than that which Broner has shown. What Broner fails to understand and may never understand is that being a true champion requires substance and grace in and out of the squared circle. For the betterment of boxing, I hope that he falls into obscurity the way Naseem Hamed did after being severely humbled by Marco Antonio Barrera.

Daniel McKrell
Parma, Ohio

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JABS & STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

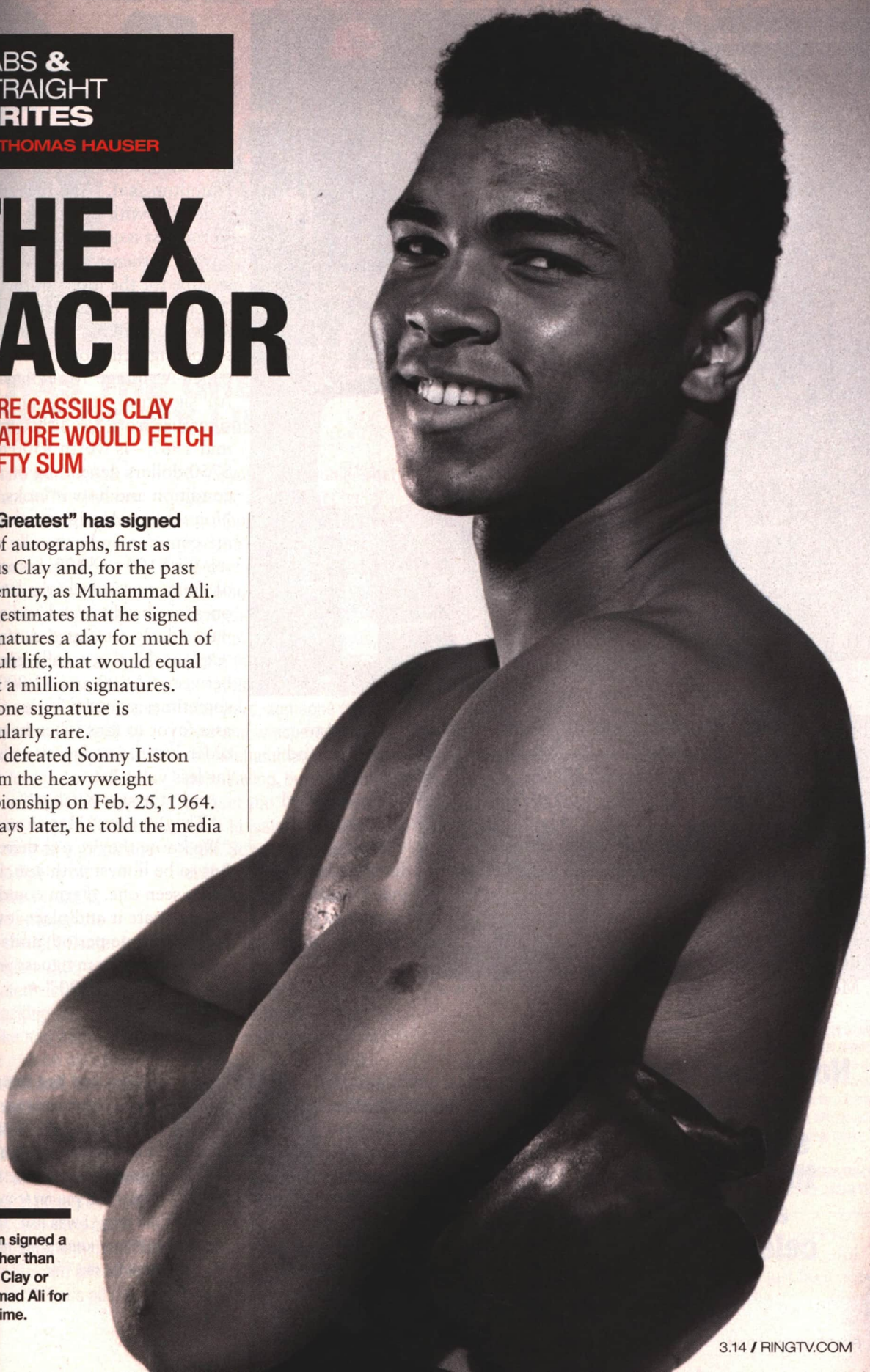
THE X FACTOR

A RARE CASSIUS CLAY SIGNATURE WOULD FETCH A HEFTY SUM

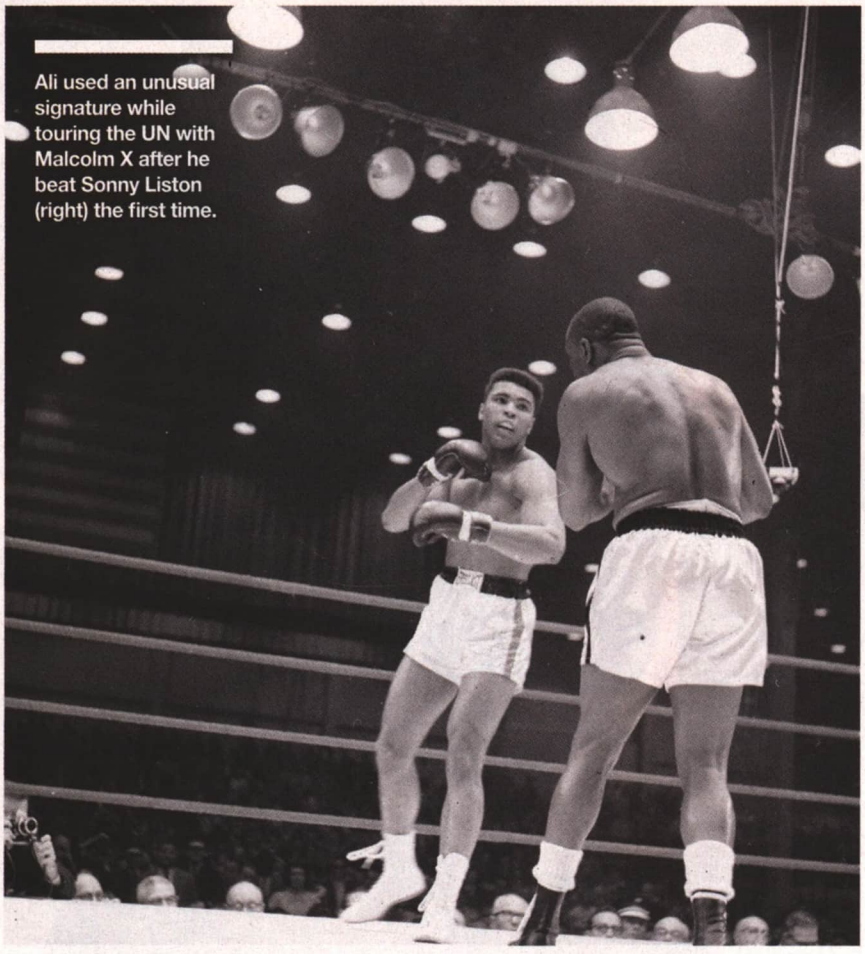
"The Greatest" has signed a lot of autographs, first as Cassius Clay and, for the past half century, as Muhammad Ali. If one estimates that he signed 50 signatures a day for much of his adult life, that would equal almost a million signatures.

But one signature is particularly rare.

Clay defeated Sonny Liston to claim the heavyweight championship on Feb. 25, 1964. Two days later, he told the media



This man signed a name other than Cassius Clay or Muhammad Ali for a short time.



Ali used an unusual signature while touring the UN with Malcolm X after he beat Sonny Liston (right) the first time.

that he had accepted the teachings of the Nation of Islam. Then, on March 6, Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad announced in a radio broadcast from Chicago: "This Clay name has no divine meaning. I hope he will accept being called by a better name. Muhammad Ali is what I will give him for as long as he believes in Allah and follows me."

Meanwhile, after beating Liston, Clay had journeyed to New York. On March 2, he and Malcolm X toured the United Nations and were photographed with various African delegates. While at the UN, Clay was asked numerous times for his autograph and signed "Cassius X Clay," incorporating the "X" as symbolic of his lost African heritage.

So what is a "Cassius X Clay" signature worth?

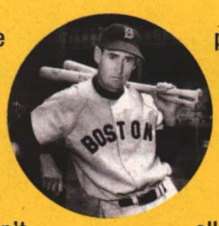
Craig Hamilton is the foremost boxing memorabilia dealer in the United States.

"There's an insatiable demand for Muhammad Ali items," Hamilton said. "And the market is flooded with phony signatures, so the first issue you always have is authentication. Let's assume for the moment that an Ali signature is authenticated. And we're talking now about a simple signature on a piece of paper. A vintage 'Muhammad Ali' signature – that is, an Ali signature from 1964 through mid-1967 – is worth $500 to $750 dollars depending on its condition and how it looks. Non-vintage Ali signatures are common and generally sell for $100 to $200. Some of them, particularly the later ones, are hard to read and not particularly attractive. A vintage 'Cassius Clay' generally goes for between $1,500 and $2,000. Ali sometimes signed 'Cassius Clay' as a favor to fans when he got older, but those signatures have far less value."

And "Cassius X Clay"?

"They're rare," Hamilton said. "We know they're out there. But to be honest with you, I've never seen one. If you could authenticate it and place it within that brief time period, and it's in good condition, my guess would be $3,000 to $3,500." ★

How does a person know that he or she has crossed the line between anonymity and celebrity status?



"There was a moment in the late 1980s," **Michael Buffer** recalls. "I was in Atlantic City [N.J.]. They were having a big baseball memorabilia show, and Ted Williams was at the fights. As you get older, you don't have the same hero worship you had when you were a kid, but you still have passion. And **Ted Williams** was … what can I say? Ted Williams was Ted Williams. I went over to introduce myself, and he said, 'Hello, Mike. I see you on television all the time.' I was like, 'Oh my god! Ted Williams knows my name.' That was special for me." ★

Kevin McBride has the distinction of retiring Mike Tyson in 2005.

'IT WAS THE GREATEST NIGHT OF MY LIFE'

There were 4,618 fans in The Theater at Madison Square Garden when Gennady Golovkin knocked out Curtis Stevens on Nov. 2. Only one of them had beaten Mike Tyson.

Kevin McBride is a genial man, 6 feet 6 inches tall, who turned pro in 1992 and fought for the last time 19 years later. He weighed 217 pounds for his pro debut. For his last fight, he toppled the scales at 296. He liked to eat, he liked to drink and he could fight a bit.

On June 11, 2005, McBride entered the ring at the MCI Center in Washington, D.C., as the designated victim for a comebacking Mike Tyson. Iron Mike had nothing left. He quit on his stool after six rounds and never fought again.

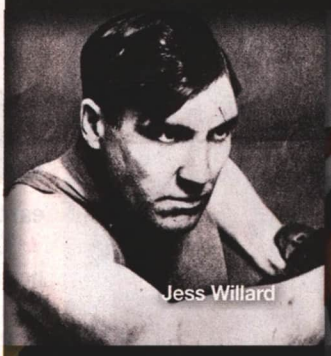
"It was the greatest night of my life," McBride reminisced before Golovkin-Stevens. "At one point, Mike cracked me with a good shot. I hugged him, held on for dear life, and whispered in his ear, 'If that's all you have, you're in trouble.' That got him so mad that he bit my nipple and tried to break my arm off at the elbow. If he'd hit me again instead of doing that stuff, he might have knocked me out."

"What a night that was," McBride continued. "At the press conference afterward, someone came over and whispered in my ear, 'Muhammad Ali is here. He's leaving, but he wants to meet you.' Ali had been there to watch his daughter fight. So I got up and went over to say hello to Ali. It was like meeting God. In one night, I beat a legend and met the greatest fighter of all time."

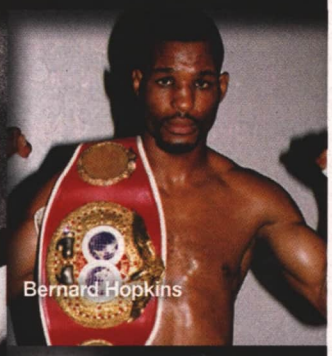
McBride wasn't able to capitalize financially on his victory over Tyson the way he wanted to. He lost six of his next eight fights and left the sweet science with a record of 35-10-1 (29 knockouts). But the glow from that magical evening remains, leaving him to say: "I smile whenever I think of that night. I shocked the world, and I shocked myself." ★

QUICK QUIZ

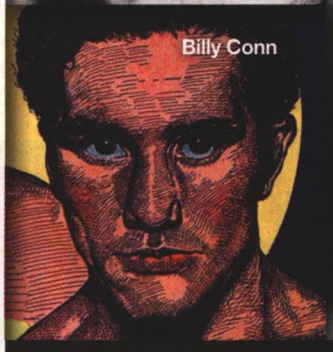
1. JESS WILLARD, BILLY CONN, HENRY ARMSTRONG AND BERNARD HOPKINS SHARE A DUBIOUS DISTINCTION: EACH MAN LOST HIS FIRST PRO FIGHT. WHO BEAT THEM?



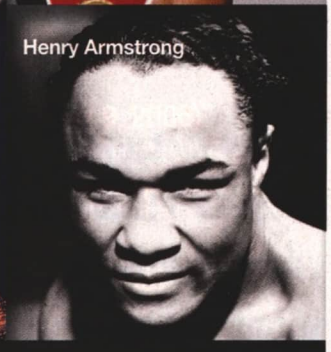
Jess Willard



Bernard Hopkins



Billy Conn



Henry Armstrong

2. WHO WAS THE FIRST WOMAN TO JUDGE A HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHT?

3. WHICH NATIONAL BOXING TITLE DID EMANUEL STEWARD WIN?

QUICK QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Willard (disqualification against Louis Firpo), Conn (decision against Dick Wodwer), Armstrong (KO against Al Iovino) and Hopkins (decision against Clinton Mitchell).

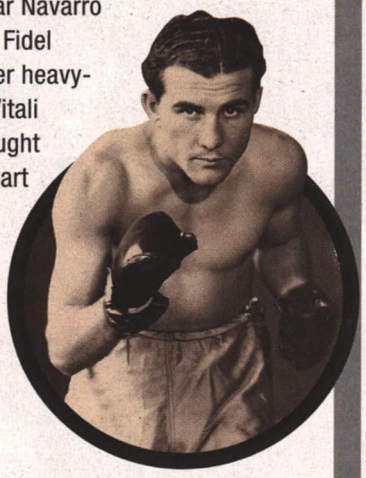
2. Eva Shain, who was in one of the judges' seats for the September 29, 1977, fight between Muhammad Ali and Earnie Shavers. New York had a round scoring system at the time. Shain scored the bout 9-6 for Ali. The other two judges scored it 9-6 (Tony Castellano) and 9-5-1 (Johnny LoBianco) for Ali.

3. Steward compiled a 94-3 amateur record and won the 1963 National Golden Gloves bantamweight championship.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book (*Straight Writes and Jabs: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing*) has just been published by the University of Arkansas Press.

ADVANCED DEGREES

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their counterparts today. This month, reader Oscar Navarro connects flyweight Fidel LaBarba with former heavyweight titleholder Vitali Klitschko – who fought almost 90 years apart – in nine steps.



FIDEL LaBARBA

fought …

JIMMY McLARNIN who fought …

JACKIE FIELDS who fought …

VINCE DUNDEE who fought …

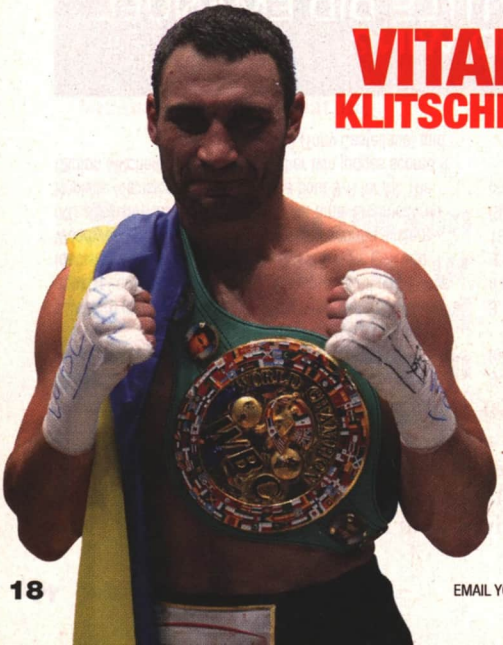
TEDDY YAROSZ who fought …

ARCHIE MOORE who fought …

MUHAMMAD ALI who fought …

GEORGE FOREMAN who fought …

SHANNON BRIGGS who fought …



VITALI KLITSCHKO

FIGHTERS' FAVORITES

WHAT BOXERS ARE INTO OUTSIDE THE SPORT

By **Anson Wainwright**

ANTONIO TARVER

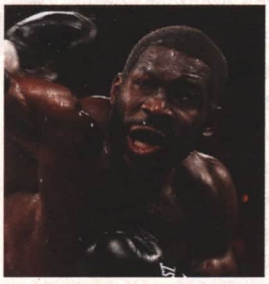
HEAVYWEIGHT CONTENDER

MUSIC – "Hip-hop." ★ **CAR –** "I've got a Bentley and a Range Rover." ★ **FOOD –** "I love soul food, but I can't eat that now, so salads and such now. I do like Italian." ★ **TATTOOS –** "I have a couple of tattoos. I've got a scorpion with boxing gloves on it, and I've got a damaged heart with Band-Aids with spikes coming through it." ★ **ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING –** "Probably Tiger Woods." ★ **MOVIE –** "Definitely *Rocky Balboa*! (Laughs.)" ★ **VIDEO GAME –** "I don't play video games, but I'd probably say *Fight Night*."

KUBRAT PULEV

HEAVYWEIGHT CONTENDER

MUSIC – "My girlfriend, Andrea [a popular singer in Eastern Europe]." ★ **CAR –** "A European SUV like a Mercedes M-Class." ★ **FOOD –** "Tarator [Bulgarian cucumber soup]." ★ **TATTOOS –** "I have no tattoos and no desire to get one." ★ **ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING –** "Usain Bolt." ★ **MOVIE –** "*The Godfather.*" ★ **VIDEO GAME –** "I sometimes play mini-games on my cell phone."



BRYANT JENNINGS

HEAVYWEIGHT CONTENDER

MUSIC – "Jay-Z, rap music, hip-hop." ★ **CAR –** "I still keep it G. I'm driving a Mercury Grand Marquis with extra-dark tinted windows. I'd like a Mercedes S65." ★ **FOOD –** "Crab cakes and salmon. I don't eat meat. I'm a pescatarian." ★ **TATTOOS –** "I have no tattoos. I don't believe in marking your body." ★ **ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING –** "LeBron James." ★ **MOVIE –** "*Life*, with Eddie Murphy and Martin Lawrence." ★ **VIDEO GAME –** "I haven't played a video game since I was 15 years old. I don't even know what a PS2 looks like, let alone a PS3."

EMAIL YOUR ADVANCED DEGREES TO COMEOUTWRITING@SEPUBLICATIONS.COM.

GOOD, BAD, WORSE

THE BEST AND WORST IN BOXING FROM THE PAST MONTH

By **Michael Rosenthal**

Good

Vitali Klitschko has long been recognized as one of the two best heavyweights in the world yet is underappreciated. Klitschko, who gave up his WBC title in December and hinted at retirement, dominated his opponents more thoroughly than his brother but somehow was almost always No. 2. Wladimir Klitschko (61-3, 51 KOs) was stopped three times and struggled in other fights while Vitali (45-2, 41 KOs) barely lost a round in his career. Wladimir faced no truly formidable opponents while Vitali fought Lennox Lewis on even terms in a fight cut short because of a cut. Vitali's only other loss, to Chris Byrd, was the result of a shoulder injury. And while Wladimir has an impressive knockout ratio of 79.69 percent, Vitali is at 87.23. This isn't to downgrade Wladimir, who deserves every accolade for a dominating run as champion. It is simply to give Vitali full credit for his own remarkable boxing career as he transitions into a career in politics.

Bad

Adrien Broner should be applauded for his fighting spirit under great duress against Marcos Maidana on Dec. 14. He took a beating but never gave up. He considered doing so, though. The head butt that cost Maidana a point in Round 8 was barely a butt at all. Still, Broner acted as if he was dazed, first writhing on the ground and then standing in the corner with a forlorn look that said, "I don't know if I can continue." To his credit, he did continue. He fought hard until the final bell. But his instinct to consider quitting doesn't speak well of him. Neither does the fact he bolted from the ring after the fight before he could be interviewed. He also reportedly refused an immediate interview in his dressing room. Of course, that's understandable. He was embarrassed by an opponent he was expected to dominate. Again, though, he would've earned respect had he chosen to speak on camera. It was an awful night all around for Broner.

Worse

The World Boxing Association. It doesn't get worse than that. I have long railed against the proliferation of world titles, which has reached an absurd 68 if each of the four major sanctioning bodies are allotted one "champion" in each of the 17 divisions. Sadly, because of its dual world title policy, the WBA has the potential to have 34 "titleholders" alone. The main problem is that the organization allows for two champions, called "super," "regular," "unified," "undisputed" or just "world." Confusing? Some of the weight classes have two champions, some one and some none, which only adds to the ridiculous nature of the policy. The result is that WBA belts, so pathetically watered down, are the most worthless of the four sanctioning bodies. THE RING recognizes only the top man – whatever he's called – as the WBA titleholder for the sake of clarity and doing what we believe is the right thing. Of course, the idea of the dual titles was motivated by greed. What else? The WBA receives a fee for every "title" fight. The price the WBA pays is an enormous hit to its already shaky credibility.

A MONTHLY BOXING LIST:

10

This month: In honor of Oscar De La Hoya's election to the Boxing International Hall of Fame, 10 of the Golden Boy's most important victories.

1. **Fernando Vargas (KO 11, 2002)**
   His most satisfying victory.
2. **Ike Quartey (SD 12, 1999)**
   Proved his mettle in an entertaining slugfest.
3. **Julio Cesar Chavez I (TKO 4, 1996)**
   Torch was passed from one generation to the next.
4. **Rafael Ruelas (KO 2, 1995)**
   Became a star on the biggest stage.
5. **Pernell Whitaker (UD 12, 1997)**
   Found a way to beat a legend.
6. **Jimmi Bredahl (TKO 10, 1994)**
   Won the first of his 10 major titles.
7. **Ricardo Mayorga (KO 9, 2006)**
   Captured his final title in a dramatic victory.
8. **Lamar Williams (KO 1, 1992)**
   Had no trouble in his pro debut.
9. **Steve Forbes (UD 12, 2008)**
   The final victory in his career.
10. **Julio Cesar Chavez II (TKO 8, 1998)**
    Not much different from the first fight.

RING POLL

A MONTHLY POLL OF OUR RINGTV.COM READERS

A potential matchup of two particular 175-pounders with crushing power has the boxing world intrigued and excited. With that in mind, we asked: **Who would win a light heavyweight showdown between Adonis Stevenson and Sergey Kovalev?** Here is how you responded.

THE PERCENTAGES:

Kovalev by KO **64.6**
Stevenson by KO **25.7**
Stevenson by decision **5.9**
Draw **2.0**
Kovalev by decision **1.8**

***Note:** 2,641 readers voted*

JOE CALZAGHE

By **Anson Wainwright**

Joe Calzaghe accomplished a great deal in his 15-year boxing career, but one thing stands out: The "0" in his loss column. The "Pride of Wales" won all 46 of his pro fights (32 by knockout).

And that's saying something given the long list of capable opponents he swept aside to become one of the greatest 168-pounders ever, including Chris Eubank, Robin Reid, Richie Woodhall, Charles Brewer, Jeff Lacy, Sakio Bika and Mikkel Kessler.

Calzaghe outpointed Chris Eubank in 1997 to win his first world title, the WBO version, and successfully defended it a division-record 21 times over a dominating decade to establish himself as an all-time great. Only heavyweight legend Joe Louis reigned longer.

He would add the IBF, WBC, WBA and RING titles to his collection before moving up to light heavyweight for his final two bouts.

Many of Calzaghe's fights were memorable, particularly to his fans in the U.K. Blessed with great hand speed and athleticism, Calzaghe made a mockery of the oddsmakers with his win over Lacy for the IBF title.

Sugar Ray Leonard was one of many who were greatly impressed.

"The performance he produced was amazing," Leonard wrote in his autobiography. "It was artistic, a demonstration of pure boxing. Joe would have beat anyone with that style, that mindset. What he performed was a boxing clinic, masterful."

The Kessler fight, the following year, drew 50,000 rabid hometown fans to Millennium Stadium in Cardiff. And Calzaghe didn't disappoint. The first six rounds were close but, after Calzaghe made adjustments, he pulled away from the talented Dane to win the WBA and WBC titles.

Then came new frontiers.

Calzaghe moved up to 175 pounds and boarded a plane for America to take on none other than Bernard Hopkins, one of the greatest middleweights ever who at 43 still had the ability to win big fights. Calzaghe went down in the first round but came home with a split-decision victory, proving he could win away from home.

Seven months later, Calzaghe ended his career with a one-sided decision over Roy Jones Jr. at the famed Madison Square Garden in New York City.

"I basically did to Roy Jones what Roy Jones did to everyone," Calzaghe told THE RING.

Calzaghe retired in February 2009, becoming one of the few to leave the sport without experiencing a defeat. No one was surprised when the International Boxing Hall of Fame announced recently that Calzaghe will be inducted in 2014, his first year of eligibility.

Now 41, he splits his time between his home in Wales and London. He has made a number of appearances on TV in the U.K. since he retired, including *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Master Chef*.

Calzaghe graciously agreed to speak to THE RING about the best he faced.

BEST OVERALL

MIKKEL KESSLER: That's close. I would say when I beat him, he was at his peak, 39-0. I think I was a bit older than him. It was my last fight at super middleweight. Massive pressure at the Millennium Stadium, 50,000, he held three belts. The Mikkel Kessler I beat I think was the best Mikkel Kessler. Kessler just edges it between him and Bernard Hopkins.

BEST BOXER

RICHIE WOODHALL: He was very motivated for that fight. I remember I was edging the fight. He started to tire. He was a very good boxer. He fought the right tactics, great amateur. He used his reach and boxed in and out on his toes, [using] his right hand against the southpaw. He caught me with a few of them bad boys before I sussed him out.

BEST JAB

KESSLER: That's a tough one. I'd probably say Kessler had the best jab, at least for the first six rounds.

Joe Calzaghe (right, against Sakio Bika) left boxing with a perfect record.

BEST DEFENSE

BERNARD HOPKINS: I think Hopkins had the best defense. I think he's so wily. The way he fights from range stops you working your way in. He's very hard to catch clean. I was throwing lots of shots. He's very clever, like a fox. He's sly. He comes in and out of range. He'll tie you up on the blind side of the ref.

BEST CHIN

JEFF LACY: I've fought quite a few people with good chins ... but the amount of times I hit Jeff Lacy and he didn't go down. To be honest, I hit him over a thousand times. How he stood up to that beating I'll never know. So I have to give him some kudos for taking the beating he took. That was my perfect night, I think. I just brought my "A" game.

BEST PUNCHER

CHARLES BREWER: There's a few. Kessler hit hard, but I'd probably go with Charles Brewer. My game plan was to outbox him, but Charles "The Hatchet" Brewer I had seen knock out lots of guys. So I figure I'll outbox him. I remember in the first round he came out and whacked me right in the solar plexus. If you watch the tape, you see me take a deep breath and then go toe to toe for the rest of the fight. He buzzed me up a few times in that fight. Heavy-handed and dangerous from the first round till the 12th.

FASTEST HANDS

NO ONE: I never really look at opponents and think of them as fast, because I'm so much quicker. I don't mean to sound funny. When I fought super middleweights, I always found them quite slow even though they're fast. I used to spar with welterweights because of my hand speed.

FASTEST FEET

KESSLER: I tried to force the fight in the first four rounds [against Kessler] but because he's so good with his feet, I was falling short, and he was moving back and catching me with the right hand and uppercuts. He busted me up twice in the fourth round. I sat back on the stool and my dad said, "What's going on?" I said, "I've got to change something." ... I started to outbox him from the outside. He was waiting for me and was good with speed and timing. I'd probably give Kessler the edge.

SMARTEST

HOPKINS: He was the smartest guy I fought, definitely. He had a game plan and he nullified me. He tired in the second half of the fight, though. When he started whining to the referee, I knew he was tired. I kept throwing punches. I'm strong mentally and he knew that. There's one thing that happened that not many people realize. At the weigh-in, he looked at my ribs and said, "I'm going to f------ bust them up, man. I come from the street." I looked at him and said, "What the f--- does that mean? I'm going to bust them up" (pointing at Hopkins' ribs). He took a step back from me and looked at me like he didn't believe I had just said anything back to him. I just laughed, and he walked away. The next day when he came into the ring, Hopkins didn't wear his hood for the only time. Why is that? I think he knew he couldn't get in my head. I took that as a positive.

STRONGEST

SAKIO BIKA: He's one tough son of a bitch! Sakio Bika was tough. That's the only time I've been really bashed. I had six stitches from a head butt, there were shoulders, elbows, everything going in. I hit him with everything, couldn't hurt him. This was the fight after Jeff Lacy. Physically strong guy.

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CARD GIRL OF THE MONTH

BY HEATHER SHANHOLTZ

Dave Alan

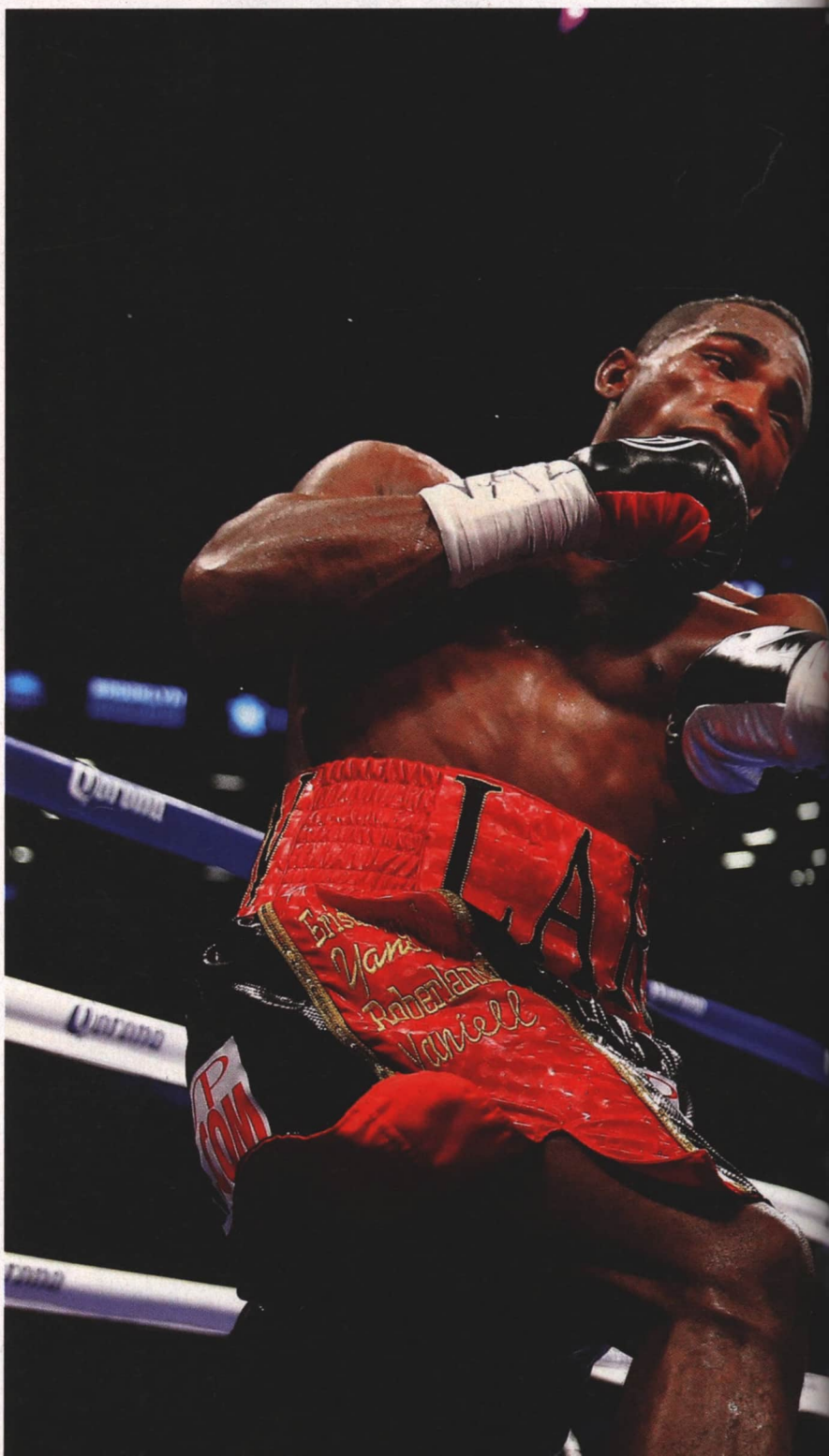
Keila Tavares

Height: 5 feet 6 inches
Weight: 112 pounds
Measurements: 32-23-32
Stance: Orthodox
Reach: 24 inches
Favorite Boxer: Muhammad Ali
Hometown: Brasilia, Brazil
Current location: Las Vegas
Where you've seen her: *Ultimate MMA Magazine*, *SocialChic Boutique* website and marketing campaign, small commercials and conventions.

 By David Greisman

THAT'S NOT ENTERTAINMENT

ERISLANDY LARA AND GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX ARE GIFTED BUT CAN'T CONNECT WITH FANS



Respect is one thing. Ratings and riches are another. And this December there was a direct relationship between how much Guillermo Rigondeaux and Erislandy Lara won by and how little they won fans over.

They were pretty much untouchable — and their bouts pretty much unwatchable.

That was evident in the weak television ratings for their respective matches. Few stuck around to see them perform. Fewer still will willingly watch them again.

Granted, there are several boxers whose emphasis on defensive ability is not a marketing liability. They tend to be the exceptions, and there tend to be reasons for that beyond just an appreciation for footwork, head movement and strategic clinching. Though some will argue that the point of the sport is to hit and not be hit, there's another important sign of success: being a hit.

To be fair, Rigondeaux's shutout of Joseph Agbeko and Lara's wide decision over Austin Trout weren't cases of them trying to get away with,

well, getting away from their opposition. But they needed their performances to be more inspiring. Though Rigondeaux and Lara both went 2-0 in 2013, they might as well have gone winless. The big victories they scored in the first half of the year were squandered by the second.

Some of that is their fault, but not all of it. In a way, each was set up to fail.

Lara had entertained in his dramatic stoppage win of Alfredo Angulo back in June. Frankly, he'd been forced to fight, but he also didn't shy away from it. It was a good style matchup. It was clear from the moment it was made that the Trout bout was not. It pitted two counterpunchers against each other, and Trout foolishly put himself in the unnatural and unfortunate position of being the aggressor against someone content with remaining the master boxer.

Erislandy Lara (left) gave Austin Trout a boxing lesson but relatively few were interested in watching.

Lara has long wanted the big fights in the junior middleweight division, matches in which his promoter has seemingly been loathe to put him. Lara does belong in with the top names in his stable but will not be if he keeps giving Golden Boy an excuse to avoid doing so. That's what the matchmaking behind Lara-Trout was seemingly designed to do, though Lara also didn't help his own cause.

Rigondeaux, meanwhile, scored the biggest win of his pro career to kick off his year, outboxing promotional and network darling Nonito Donaire in April. Yet HBO had Donaire back on before Rigondeaux returned, and Top Rank's Bob Arum didn't do his fighter any favors in essentially depicting Rigondeaux as boring. He then shoved his Cuban two-time Olympic gold medalist (who lives in Miami) into an Atlantic City ballroom on a cold December night.

Perhaps it was for the best that the New Jersey crowd emptied out after their local guy, Glen Tapia, lost the co-feature bout in a war with James Kirkland. No one needed to see what happened in the main event.

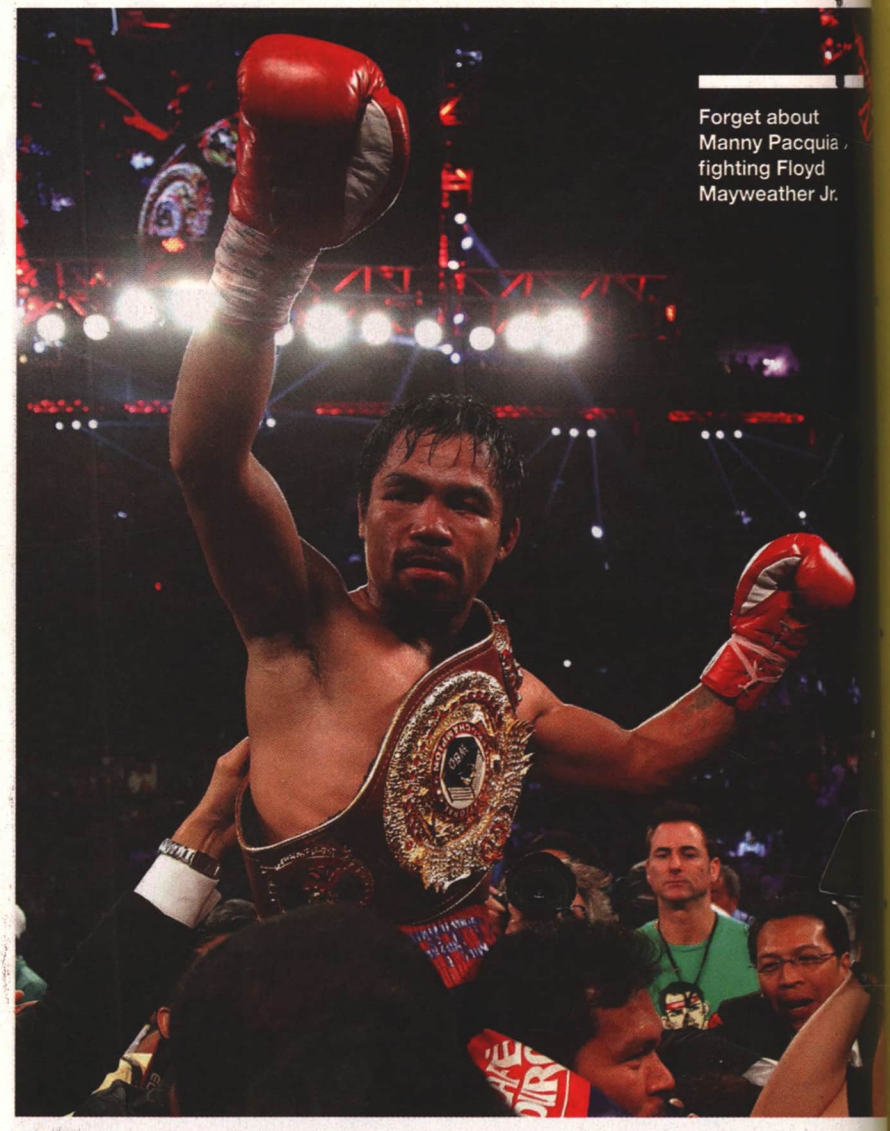
Trout's offense was poor enough against Lara in that he landed just 97 punches over 12 rounds. Agbeko barely did half that, hitting Rigondeaux just 48 times. He rarely opened up, far too concerned with protecting

himself from potential counter shots. And with Agbeko in a shell, Rigondeaux was active, but only in a way so as not to leave himself vulnerable.

No one wants to watch a matador face a bull that refuses to charge.

And few will want to watch Rigondeaux and Lara unless people are drawn to their personalities, or if they develop more ethnic and regional fan support, or if they implement a style that makes audiences nod rather than making them nod off. It's one thing if they make it so that their opponents can't hit them. It's a better thing if they make it so that the paying public can't miss them.

★



Forget about Manny Pacquia, fighting Floyd Mayweather Jr.

We pretty much knew the possibility of a fight between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao was gone years ago, when the two biggest stars in the sport decided they didn't need each other.

Even the casual fans recognized that Mayweather-Pacquiao was never going to happen once Pacquiao was laid out at the end of 2012 by a Juan Manuel Marquez right hand.

Yet the questions resurfaced after Pacquiao outpointed Brandon Rios in November and showed that he wasn't done yet.

You can stop asking if it will happen. You can stop thinking that it could happen.

It won't happen, not so long as Bob Arum is saying that Pacquiao will return in April and Mayweather already has reserved his traditional fight weekends in May and September.

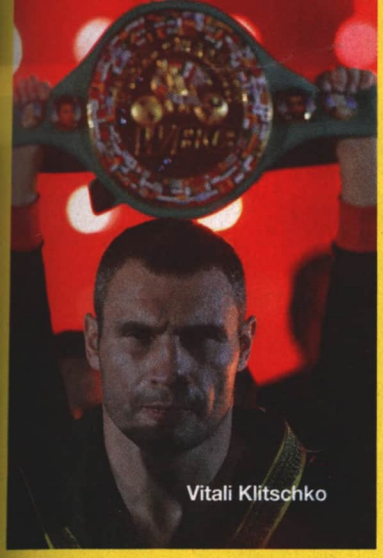
It won't happen, not so long as Mayweather is demeaning Pacquiao for going 1-2 in his last three fights, all while he's presumably in negotiations to face Amir Khan, who's gone 2-2 in his last four. Mayweather wouldn't shatter records with Khan the way he did with Canelo Alvarez. He would shatter Khan, though.

Mayweather-Khan might have been announced by the time you read this, or Mayweather might have gone in another direction. I hope he does go in another direction, even though Khan brings more speed and a different style than we're used to seeing.

Yes, Khan's recent defeats were to very good fighters: a controversial split decision against Lamont Peterson, and a technical-knockout loss to Danny Garcia. Since then, though, all he's done is face the undersized Carlos Molina (not the 154-pound titleholder of the same name) and then have far too hard a time going the distance with Julio Diaz.

I'd love to be proven wrong, for Mayweather to be given a tough fight and for him to be pushed into demonstrating more of his incredible talent. But anyone who believes Khan is the one to do that against Mayweather is, well, being Khanned out of their money.

By **Brian Harty**


Vitali Klitschko

TITLE WAIVE

It's rare that you can say a heavyweight boxer is discontinuing his career to pursue something *more* perilous. **Vitali Klitschko** became the exception in mid-December, vacating his WBC title so he can devote his energy to running for president in Ukraine.

Which means we are now witnesses to an even rarer phenomenon: a heavyweight belt up for grabs.

He only wore one belt at a time, as opposed to the four his brother **Wladimir** now lugs into the ring each time he fights, but it was Vitali who launched the Klitschko dynasty in 1999. He took the WBO title from **Herbie Hide** by a second-round knockout but lost it as a result of a shoulder injury in his third defense against **Chris Byrd** (who subsequently became the first donor to Wladimir's collection).

His only other loss in 47 fights (41 of which he won by knockout) solidified him in the American consciousness. But despite the image from Los Angeles in 2003 of Vitali and his pulped face warring valiantly against **Lennox Lewis** until the doctor stepped in, he never really caught on in the U.S. He was, like his brother, too big, too careful and, to American eyes, too boring. But appreciative audiences overseas saw a four-time titleholder – including the RING championship – make a total of 12 defenses against virtually every credible challenger in the game.

Now appreciative Ukrainians are following him into a new struggle. In December, for example, video emerged from Kiev of Klitschko standing at the potential epicenter of a riot between anti-government protesters and armored police, barking for peace through a bullhorn. People listened.

His "champion emeritus" status allows him the option to return and fight to regain the belt, though Klitschko himself said it isn't likely. With the title now vacant, and with Canadian **Bermane Stiverne** and Americans **Chris Arreola** and **Deontay Wilder** rated Nos. 1-3 by the WBC, it might mean that U.S. fans will get their longed-for champion in 2014. Of course, it may also mean Wladimir is just a couple fights from having every title in the division.

Boxing's other political dabbler, **Manny Pacquiao**, was accused in December of owing $18.5 million in unpaid U.S. taxes, which followed the report that he owes 2.2 *billion* pesos (or about $50 million) in the Philippines. Both claims revolve around how much Pacquiao paid in the U.S. during the height of his career, with the IRS saying he underpaid and the Bureau of Internal Revenue in the Philippines saying he provided no proof that he'd paid anything. Pacquiao and promoter **Bob Arum** denied the allegations, saying Top Rank had paid 30 percent of all earnings directly to the IRS. Pacquiao's assets, meanwhile, were frozen in his homeland, and he reportedly borrowed a million pesos to purchase aid for victims of Typhoon Haiyan.

Pacquiao also launched a new promotional company, **MAG Pacman Boxing International Promotions** (hopefully they'll just go with "MAG"), with former world titleholder **Gerry Penalosa** and businessman **Anson Tiu-Co**. Their first card featured junior lightweight contender **Michael Farenas**, as well as Penalosa's nephew, **Dodie Boy Jr.**

Brandon Rios tested positive for the stimulant methylexanamine following his Nov. 23 loss to Pacquiao in Macau. He was suspended for five months by the China Professional Boxing Organization, while action on the U.S. side was still pending at press time.

Andre Ward filed a lawsuit in his latest attempt to break away from promoter **Dan Goossen**. The contract that binds the two until 2015 was upheld by the California State Athletic Commission in June.

Mike Tyson canceled plans to promote his new autobiography in the U.K. after a recently-passed immigration law there barred him from entering the country because of the jail time he served for a rape conviction.

Former lightweight titleholder **Javier Jauregui**, 40, died on Dec. 11 of complications from a stroke. He won the vacant IBF title in 2003 with an 11th-round stoppage of **Leavander Johnson**, who died 22 months later after a loss to **Jesus Chavez**. Jauregui's funeral costs were reportedly covered by his friend and training mate **Canelo Alvarez**.

Jacob "Baby Jake" Matlala died at 51 on Dec. 7, two days after one of his biggest fans, **Nelson Mandela**, passed away in South Africa. Matlala held world titles at 108 and 112 pounds between 1993 and 1997, with the final fight of his 53-13-2 (26 KOs) career taking place in 2002. That fight was attended by Mandela, himself a boxer who spent many years living in the infamous Soweto township where Matlala was born.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

MARCOS MAIDANA

By **Michael Rosenthal**

Marcos Maidana had fallen short against particularly good technicians in the past, losing decisions to Andreas Kotelnik, Amir Khan and Devon Alexander in recent years.

There was no reason to believe that he would fare any better against the gifted Adrien Broner on Dec. 14 at the Alamodome in San Antonio. Broner, the self-proclaimed heir to Floyd Mayweather Jr. who had climbed onto some pound-for-pound lists, had the kind of skill and quickness that everyone presumed would give Maidana trouble.

And then the plucky Argentine demonstrated what unwavering confidence, savage intentions and great punching power can accomplish.

Maidana (35-3, 31 knockouts) buzzed Broner (27-1, 22 KOs) in the first round and put him down in the second, setting up a pitched battle

of wills and resilience that few could've imagined beforehand.

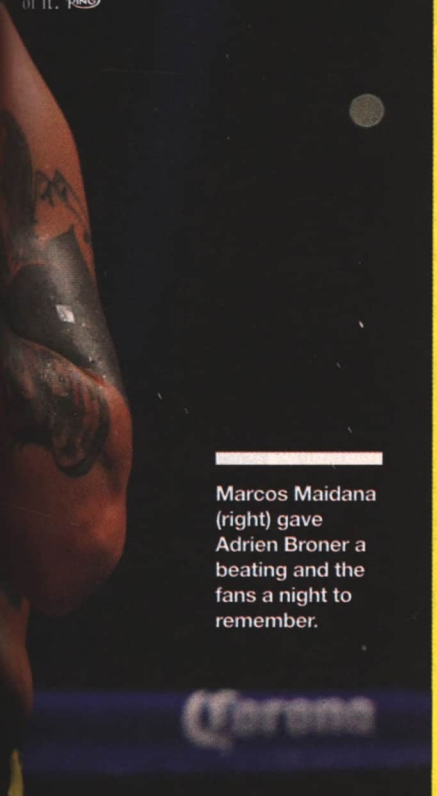
Broner survived the early onslaught and had his moments but simply couldn't turn the tide, not with his possessed opponent firing hard, damaging punches – which put Broner down again in the eighth – almost without letup until the final bell.

The official scores were no surprise: 117-109, 115-109 and 115-110, all for Maidana.

The longtime contender accomplished a great deal in one night. He took Broner's WBA welterweight title, his first major belt after nine-plus years as a pro. He turned in a career-defining performance that sent shock waves through the boxing world.

And, perhaps most importantly, he thrilled appreciative fans who will adore him more than ever.

Indeed, we were treated to one of the most exciting fights of the year on the final big weekend of boxing in 2013. And no one should be surprised that Marcos Maidana, the unrelenting warrior who is better than we realized, was at the center of it. RING



Marcos Maidana (right) gave Adrien Broner a beating and the fans a night to remember.

POUND FOR POUND: Junior featherweight champ Guillermo Rigondeaux rose from No. 10 to No. 8 after easily outboxing former bantamweight titleholder Joseph Agbeko. That bumped Adrien Broner and Saul Alvarez down to Nos. 9 and 10, respectively. Broner was then ousted after his Upset of the Year loss to Marcos Maidana, Alvarez went back to No. 9, and British super middleweight Carl Froch arrived at No. 10.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Beibut Shumenov finally returned to the ring and successfully defended his WBA title with a third-round knockout of Tamas Kovacs (unrated). Shumenov entered at No. 6, pushing those below down a spot. No one was ousted as a result of Shumenov's victory, though, as Karo Murat (No. 8 last month) was removed following his loss to Bernard Hopkins in October. Juergen Braehmer (No. 9 last month) also gained a spot after outpointing Marcus Oliveira (unrated) in Germany.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Felix Sturm (No. 5 last month) got back into the world titlist club with a second-round knockout of No. 2-rated Darren Barker; they swapped places in the ratings. Martin Murray (No. 6 last month) was demoted one notch after his unimpressive points victory over Sergey Khomitsky (unrated) in a London eight-rounder.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Austin Trout fell from No. 2 to No. 5 after he was outpointed by Erislandy Lara, who rose from No. 4 to No. 2. IBF titleholder Carlos Molina (No. 5 last month) gained a spot in the exchange.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Shawn Porter (unrated) scored a unanimous decision to take the IBF title from Devon Alexander. Porter entered at No. 7 while Alexander fell to No. 10, and Paulie Malignaggi (No. 9 last month) swapped with No. 8 Keith Thurman after winning a UD over Zab Judah (rated No. 6 at 140 pounds). In the process, No. 10 Marcos Maidana was pushed from the list. The Argentine gunslinger returned at No. 9, however, after delivering a unanimously affirmed beatdown to Adrien Broner (No. 7 last month), who replaced Alexander at No. 10. Thurman then gained two ranks to settle at No. 7 after an impressive ninth-round knockout of Jesus Soto Karass.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Just one day after the death of iconic civil-rights leader Nelson Mandela, South African underdog Simpiwe Vetyeka (unrated) knocked Chris John from his long-held perch at No. 1 with a sixth-round KO. Vetyeka earned the No. 5 spot with the victory, while John fell to No. 6 and everyone else adjusted up or down accordingly. Recent 126-pound arrival Nonito Donaire (No. 10) was pushed off the list.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No change.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Tomoki Kameda (No. 9 last month) successfully defended his WBO title with a wide points victory over Immanuel Naidjala (unrated) and rose a notch to No. 8.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Unrated South African Zolani Tete knocked out Juan Carlos Sanchez (No. 2 at the time) in the 10th round and entered the ratings at No. 5. Sanchez fell to No. 6, and the previous Nos. 3 through 5 moved up to fill the gap.

FLYWEIGHTS: Moruti Mthalane (No. 5 last month) was removed for inactivity, so everyone below him gained a rank and Filipino Rocky Fuentes entered at No. 10.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Thai fighter Paipharob Kokietgym (No. 10 last month) was also removed for inactivity and replaced by South African Nkosinathi Joyi.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No change.

Beibut Shumenov (right) returned from an 18-month layoff to stop Tamas Kovacs in the third round.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

- C **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine | 61-3-0 (51 KOs)
- 1. **KUBRAT PULEV** Bulgaria | 19-0-0 (10 KOs)
- 2. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia | 26-1-0 (18 KOs)
- 3. **TOMASZ ADAMEK** Poland | 49-2-0 (29 KOs)
- 4. **BERMANE STIVERNE** Canada | 23-1-1 (20 KOs)
- 5. **TYSON FURY** U.K. | 21-0-0 (15 KOs)
- 6. **ROBERT HELENIUS** Finland | 19-0-0 (11 KOs)
- 7. **CHRIS ARREOLA** U.S. | 36-3-0 (31 KOs)
- 8. **ODLANIER SOLIS** Cuba | 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- 9. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan | 32-2-1 (20 KOs)
- 10. **DEONTAY WILDER** U.S. | 30-0-0 (30 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

- C **YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ** Cuba | 28-1-0 (14 KOs)
- 1. **MARCO HUCK** Germany | 36-2-1 (25 KOs)
- 2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK** Poland | 49-2-1 (35 KOs)
- 3. **DENIS LEBEDEV** Russia | 25-2-0 (19 KOs)
- 4. **OLA AFOLABI** U.K. | 20-3-4 (9 KOs)
- 5. **GRIGORY DROZD** Russia | 37-1-0 (26 KOs)
- 6. **ILUNGA MAKUBA** Congo | 15-1-0 (14 KOs)
- 7. **FIRAT ARSLAN** Germany | 33-6-2 (21 KOs)
- 8. **DMYTRO KUCHER** Ukraine | 21-1-0 (15 KOs)
- 9. **MATEUSZ MASTERNAK** Poland | 30-1-0 (22 KOs)
- 10. **THABISO MCHUNU** South Africa | 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

- C **ADONIS STEVENSON** Canada | 23-1-0 (20 KOs)
- 1. **BERNARD HOPKINS** U.S. | 54-6-2 (32 KOs)
- 2. **SERGEY KOVALEV** Russia | 23-0-1 (21 KOs)
- 3. **NATHAN CLEVERLY** U.K. | 26-1-0 (12 KOs)
- 4. **CHAD DAWSON** U.S. | 31-3-0 (17 KOs)
- 5. **TAVORIS CLOUD** U.S. | 24-2-0 (19 KOs)
- 6. **BEIBUT SHUMENOV** Kazakhstan | 14-1-0 (9 KOs)
- 7. **TONY BELLEW** U.K. | 20-2-1 (12 KOs)
- 8. **JUERGEN BRAEHMER** Germany | 42-2-0 (31 KOs)
- 9. **ISAAC CHILEMBA** Malawi | 21-2-2 (9 KOs)
- 10. **JEAN PASCAL** Canada | 28-2-1 (17 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

- C **ANDRE WARD** U.S. | 27-0-0 (14 KOs)
- 1. **CARL FROCH** U.K. | 32-2-0 (23 KOs)
- 2. **MIKKEL KESSLER** Denmark | 46-3-0 (35 KOs)
- 3. **LUCIAN BUTE** Romania | 31-1-0 (24 KOs)
- 4. **ROBERT STIEGLITZ** Russia | 46-3-0 (26 KOs)
- 5. **GEORGE GROVES** U.K. | 19-1-0 (15 KOs)
- 6. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM** Armenia | 38-4-0 (28 KOs)
- 7. **THOMAS OOSTHUIZEN** South Africa | 22-0-2 (13 KOs)
- 8. **SAKIO BIKA** Cameroon | 32-5-3 (21 KOs)
- 9. **JAMES DEGALE** U.K. | 17-1-0 (11 KOs)
- 10. **ANDRE DIRRELL** U.S. | 21-1-0 (14 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

- C **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Argentina | 51-2-2 (28 KOs)
- 1. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN** Kazakhstan | 28-0-0 (25 KOs)
- 2. **FELIX STURM** Germany | 39-3-2 (18 KOs)
- 3. **DANIEL GEALE** Australia | 29-2-0 (15 KOs)
- 4. **PETER QUILLIN** U.S. | 30-0-0 (22 KOs)
- 5. **DARREN BARKER** U.K. | 26-2-0 (16 KOs)
- 6. **MATTHEW MACKLIN** U.K. | 30-5-0 (20 KOs)
- 7. **MARTIN MURRAY** U.K. | 26-1-1 (11 KOs)
- 8. **MARCO ANTONIO RUBIO** Mexico | 58-6-1 (50 KOs)
- 9. **MAX BURSAK** Ukraine | 29-1-1 (12 KOs)
- 10. **CURTIS STEVENS** U.S. | 25-4-0 (18 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

- C **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.** U.S. | 45-0-0 (26 KOs)
- 1. **SAUL ALVAREZ** Mexico | 42-1-1 (30 KOs)
- 2. **ERISLANDY LARA** Cuba | 19-1-2 (12 KOs)
- 3. **MIGUEL COTTO** Puerto Rico | 38-4-0 (31 KOs)
- 4. **CARLOS MOLINA** Mexico | 22-5-2 (6 KOs)
- 5. **AUSTIN TROUT** U.S. | 26-2-0 (14 KOs)
- 6. **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** U.S. | 20-0-0 (13 KOs)
- 7. **VANES MARTIROSYAN** U.S. | 33-1-1 (21 KOs)
- 8. **WILLIE NELSON** U.S. | 21-1-1 (12 KOs)
- 9. **ISHE SMITH** U.S. | 25-6-0 (11 KOs)
- 10. **JERMELL CHARLO** U.S. | 22-0-0 (11 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

- C **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.** U.S. | 45-0-0 (26 KOs)
- 1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY** U.S. | 31-0-0 (12 KOs)
- 2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico | 55-7-1 (40 KOs)
- 3. **MANNY PACQUIAO** Philippines | 55-5-2 (38 KOs)
- 4. **KELL BROOK** U.K. | 31-0-0 (21 KOs)
- 5. **ROBERT GUERRERO** U.S. | 31-2-1 (18 KOs)
- 6. **SHAWN PORTER** U.S. | 23-0-1 (14 KOs)
- 7. **KEITH THURMAN** U.S. | 22-0-0 (20 KOs)
- 8. **PAULIE MALIGNAGGI** U.S. | 33-5-0 (7 KOs)
- 9. **MARCOS MAIDANA** Argentina | 35-3-0 (31 KOs)
- 10. **ADRIEN BRONER** U.S. | 27-1-0 (22 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

- C **DANNY GARCIA** U.S. | 27-0-0 (16 KOs)
- 1. **LUCAS MATTHYSSE** Argentina | 34-3-0 (32 KOs)
- 2. **RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV** Russia | 23-2-0 (16 KOs)
- 3. **AMIR KHAN** U.K. | 28-3-0 (19 KOs)
- 4. **MIKE ALVARADO** U.S. | 34-2-0 (23 KOs)
- 5. **LAMONT PETERSON** U.S. | 31-2-1 (16 KOs)
- 6. **ZAB JUDAH** U.S. | 42-9-0 (29 KOs)
- 7. **BRANDON RIOS** U.S. | 31-2-1 (23 KOs)
- 8. **KHABIB ALLAKHVERDIEV** Russia | 19-0-0 (9 KOs)
- 9. **DIERRY JEAN** Canada | 25-0-0 (17 KOs)
- 10. **VIKTOR POSTOL** Ukraine | 24-0-0 (10 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

- C **VACANT**
- 1. **ADRIEN BRONER** U.S. | 27-1-0 (22 KOs)
- 2. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico | 33-3-0 (13 KOs)
- 3. **RICHAR ABRIL** Cuba | 18-3-1 (8 KOs)
- 4. **RICKY BURNS** U.K. | 36-2-1 (11 KOs)
- 5. **RAYMUNDO BELTRAN** Mexico | 28-6-1 (17 KOs)
- 6. **ANTONIO DEMARCO** Mexico | 29-3-1 (22 KOs)
- 7. **SHARIF BOGERE** Uganda | 23-1-0 (15 KOs)
- 8. **KEVIN MITCHELL** U.K. | 36-2-0 (26 KOs)
- 9. **DANIEL ESTRADA** Mexico | 32-2-1 (24 KOs)
- 10. **TERENCE CRAWFORD** U.S. | 22-0-0 (16 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

- C **VACANT**
- 1. **TAKASHI UCHIYAMA** Japan | 20-0-1 (17 KOs)
- 2. **MIKEY GARCIA** U.S. | 33-0-0 (28 KOs)
- 3. **ROMAN MARTINEZ** Puerto Rico | 27-2-2 (16 KOs)
- 4. **ARGENIS MENDEZ** Dominican Rep. | 21-2-1 (11 KOs)
- 5. **JUAN CARLOS BURGOS** Mexico | 30-1-2 (20 KOs)
- 6. **DIEGO MAGDALENO** U.S. | 24-1-0 (9 KOs)
- 7. **TAKASHI MIURA** Japan | 26-2-2 (19 KOs)
- 8. **TAKAHIRO AO** Japan | 25-3-1 (12 KOs)
- 9. **WILL TOMLINSON** Australia | 21-0-1 (12 KOs)
- 10. **SERGIO THOMPSON** Mexico | 28-3-0 (26 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

- C **VACANT**
- 1. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico | 55-8-0 (47 KOs)
- 2. **ORLANDO SALIDO** Mexico | 40-12-2 (28 KOs)
- 3. **ABNER MARES** Mexico | 26-1-1 (14 KOs)
- 4. **EVGENY GRADOVICH** Russia | 18-0-0 (9 KOs)
- 5. **SIMPIWE VETYEKA** South Africa | 26-2-0 (16 KOs)
- 6. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia | 48-1-3 (22 KOs)
- 7. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico | 45-5-0 (35 KOs)
- 8. **NICHOLAS WALTERS** Jamaica | 23-0-0 (19 KOs)
- 9. **BILLY DIB** Australia | 36-3-0 (21 KOs)
- 10. **JAVIER FORTUNA** Dominican Rep. | 23-0-1 (17 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

- C **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX** Cuba | 13-0-0 (8 KOs)
- 1. **CARL FRAMPTON** U.K. | 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
- 2. **JEFFREY MATHEBULA** South Africa | 27-4-2 (14 KOs)
- 3. **LEO SANTA CRUZ** U.S. | 26-0-1 (15 KOs)
- 4. **VIC DARCHINYAN** Armenia | 39-6-1 (28 KOs)
- 5. **KIKO MARTINEZ** Spain | 29-4-0 (21 KOs)
- 6. **VICTOR TERRAZAS** Mexico | 37-3-1 (21 KOs)
- 7. **SCOTT QUIGG** U.K. | 27-0-2 (20 KOs)
- 8. **CRISTIAN MIJARES** Mexico | 49-7-2 (24 KOs)
- 9. **JHONATAN ROMERO** Colombia | 23-1-0 (12 KOs)
- 10. **FERNANDO MONTIEL** Mexico | 50-4-2 (38 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another; 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders chose not to fight one another and either of them fights No. 3, No. 4 or No. 5, the winner may be awarded THE RING belt if the Editorial Board deems the contenders worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Ratings Chairman Chuck Giampa considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world but has final say on all changes. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

Records provided by boxrec.com

RING RATINGS

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C VACANT

1. **ANSELMO MORENO**
   Panama | 34-2-1 (12 KOs)
2. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
   Japan | 19-0-2 (14 KOs)
3. **KOKI KAMEDA**
   Japan | 32-1-0 (17 KOs)
4. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines | 33-3-3 (20 KOs)
5. **HUGO RUIZ**
   Mexico | 33-2-0 (29 KOs)
6. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
   Ghana | 29-5-0 (22 KOs)
7. **JAMIE MCDONNELL**
   U.K. | 23-2-1 (10 KOs)
8. **TOMOKI KAMEDA**
   Japan | 29-0-0 (18 KOs)
9. **JULIO CEJA**
   Mexico | 25-1-0 (23 KOs)
10. **PAULUS AMBUNDA**
    Namibia | 20-1-0 (10 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C VACANT

1. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina | 40-1-2 (21 KOs)
2. **CARLOS CUADRAS**
   Mexico | 28-0-0 (23 KOs)
3. **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
   Thailand | 23-3-1 (21 KOs)
4. **TEPPARITH SINGWANCHA**
   Thailand | 24-3-0 (14 KOs)
5. **ZOLANI TETE**
   South Africa | 18-3-0 (16 KOs)
6. **JUAN CARLOS SANCHEZ JR.**
   Mexico | 17-2-1 (9 KOs)
7. **ARTHUR VILLANUEVA**
   Philippines | 24-0-0 (14 KOs)
8. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
   Thailand | 51-1-1 (17 KOs)
9. **FELIPE ORUCUTA**
   Mexico | 28-2-0 (23 KOs)
10. **DAIKI KAMEDA**
    Japan | 29-4-0 (18 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C AKIRA YAEGASHI
Japan | 19-3-0 (9 KOs)

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
   Nicaragua | 37-0-0 (31 KOs)
2. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
   Mexico | 25-2-0 (18 KOs)
3. **BRIAN VILORIA**
   U.S. | 32-4-0 (19 KOs)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
   Mexico | 49-8-0 (29 KOs)
5. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
   Argentina | 32-1-0 (17 KOs)
6. **TOSHIYUKI IGARASHI**
   Japan | 18-2-1 (11 KOs)
7. **GIOVANI SEGURA**
   Mexico | 31-3-1 (27 KOs)
8. **HERNAN MARQUEZ**
   Mexico | 36-4-0 (26 KOs)
9. **MILAN MELINDO**
   Philippines | 30-1-0 (12 KOs)
10. **ROCKY FUENTES**
    Philippines | 35-6-2 (20 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C VACANT

1. **DONNIE NIETES**
   Philippines | 32-1-4 (18 KOs)
2. **MOISES FUENTES**
   Mexico | 19-1-1 (10 KOs)
3. **KAZUTO IOKA**
   Japan | 13-0-0 (9 KOs)
4. **ADRIAN HERNANDEZ**
   Mexico | 28-2-1 (17 KOs)
5. **JOHNRIEL CASIMERO**
   Philippines | 19-2-0 (11 KOs)
6. **PEDRO GUEVARA**
   Mexico | 21-1-1 (14 KOs)
7. **FELIX ALVARADO**
   Nicaragua | 18-0-0 (15 KOs)
8. **ALBERTO ROSSEL**
   Peru | 31-8-0 (13 KOs)
9. **NAOYA INOUE**
   Japan | 5-0-0 (4 KOs)
10. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
    South Africa | 24-2-0 (17 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

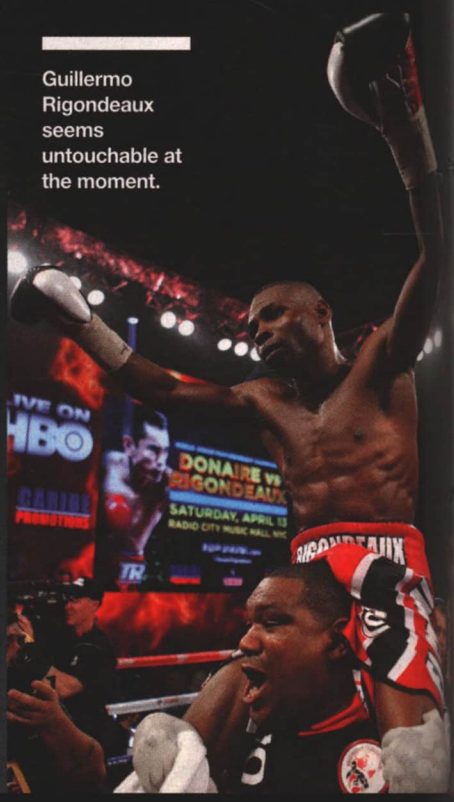
C VACANT

1. **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
   Thailand | 31-0-0 (10 KOs)
2. **HEKKIE BUDLER**
   South Africa | 24-1-0 (7 KOs)
3. **XIONG ZHAO ZHONG**
   China | 22-4-1 (12 KOs)
4. **DENVER CUELLO**
   Philippines | 33-5-6 (21 KOs)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
   Japan | 26-6-0 (10 KOs)
6. **RYO MIYAZAKI**
   Japan | 20-0-3 (11 KOs)
7. **CARLOS BUITRAGO**
   Nicaragua | 27-0-1 (16 KOs)
8. **MERLITO SABILLO**
   Philippines | 23-0-1 (12 KOs)
9. **JESUS SILVESTRE**
   Mexico | 27-4-0 (20 KOs)
10. **RYUJI HARA**
    Japan | 16-0-0 (10 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.**
   U.S. | 45-0-0 (26 KOs) | WELTERWEIGHT/ JR. MIDDLEWEIGHT
2. **ANDRE WARD**
   U.S. | 27-0-0 (14 KOs) | SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT
3. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
   U.S. | 31-0-0 (12 KOs) | WELTERWEIGHT
4. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
   Ukraine | 61-3-0 (51 KOs) | HEAVYWEIGHT
5. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
   Argentina | 51-2-2 (28 KOs) | MIDDLEWEIGHT
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Mexico | 55-7-1 (40 KOs) | WELTERWEIGHT
7. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Philippines | 55-5-2 (38 KOs) | WELTERWEIGHT
8. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
   Cuba | 13-0-0 (8 KOs) | JR. FEATHERWEIGHT
9. **SAUL ALVAREZ**
   Mexico | 42-1-1 (30 KOs) | JR. MIDDLEWEIGHT
10. **CARL FROCH**
    U.K. | 32-2-0 (23 KOs) | SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

Guillermo Rigondeaux seems untouchable at the moment.



THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings.

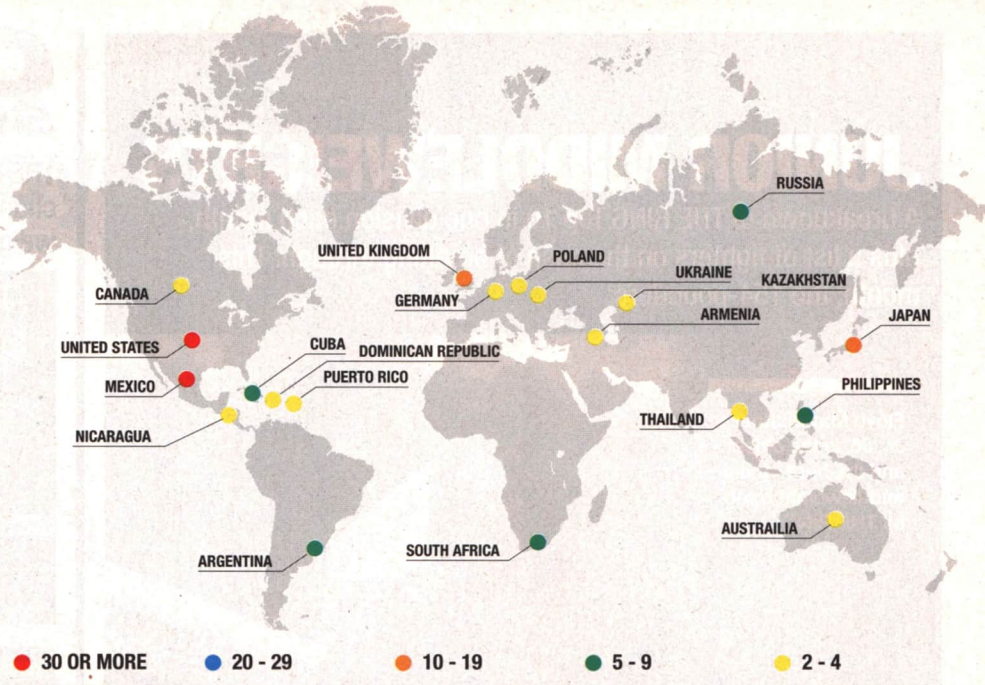
A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

A boxer who is dropped also may be reinstated if the testing agency subsequently reverses its decision or a court of competent jurisdiction finds that the test result was invalid.

RATED FIGHTERS BY COUNTRY

UNITED STATES	34 *	
MEXICO	30	
UNITED KINGDOM	17	
JAPAN	14	▼1
PHILIPPINES	9	
RUSSIA	8	
SOUTH AFRICA	7	▲2
ARGENTINA	5	
CUBA	5	
CANADA	4	
GERMANY	4	▼1
THAILAND	4	▼1
UKRAINE	4	
AUSTRALIA	3	
NICARAGUA	3	
POLAND	3	
ARMENIA	2	
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	2	
KAZAKHSTAN	2	▲1
PUERTO RICO	2	
BULGARIA	1	
CAMEROON	1	
CHINA	1	
COLOMBIA	1	
CONGO	1	
DENMARK	1	
FINLAND	1	
GHANA	1	
INDONESIA	1	
JAMAICA	1	
MALAWI	1	
NAMIBIA	1	
PANAMA	1	
PERU	1	
ROMANIA	1	
SPAIN	1	
UGANDA	1	
UZBEKISTAN	1	

**Includes two ratings for Floyd Mayweather Jr. (junior middleweight and welterweight) and Adrien Broner (welterweight and lightweight).*



USSR: THEN VS. NOW

A growing number of boxers from the former Soviet Union are finding success in the U.S., as contributor Norm Frauenheim writes on Page 80. They also are succeeding more in general, as this chart indicates. We compare the number of rated boxers from former Soviet nations around the close of 1993, 2003 and 2013 (the ratings in this issue).

DIVISION	1993	2003	2013
HEAVYWEIGHTS	0	2	3
CRUISERWEIGHTS	0	1	3
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS	0	0	2
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	0	0	2
MIDDLEWEIGHTS	0	1	2
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS	0	0	0
WELTERWEIGHTS	0	0	0
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS	1	1	3
LIGHTWEIGHTS	1	1	0
JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS	0	0	0
FEATHERWEIGHTS	0	1	1
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS	0	0	1
BANTAMWEIGHTS	0	0	0
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT	0	0	0
FLYWEIGHTS	1	1	0
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS	0	0	0
STRAWWEIGHTS	0	0	0
TOTAL	3	8	17

***The rated fighters:** 1993 – K. Tszyu, JW (Russia); O. Nazarov, L (Kyrg.); Y. Arbachakov, FLY (Russia). 2003 – V. and W. Klitschko, H (Ukr.); V. Jirov, C (Kaz.); S. Tatevosyan, M (Russia); K. Tszyu, JW; A. Grigorian, L (Uzbek.); W. Abelyan, FEATHER (Arm.), V. Darchinyan, FLY (Arm.). CURRENT – See Pages 32-34. Soviet nations with rated fighters: Ukraine, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Armenia.*

LONE REPRESENTATIVES

Some countries, such as the U.S., Mexico and the U.K., are well represented in the RING ratings. Some not so much. Among the 38 countries on the list, 18 have only one rated fighter. Here are the men who represent their countries alone (in order of weight).

KUBRAT PULEV, HEAVYWEIGHT (BULGARIA)

ROBERT HELENIUS, HEAVYWEIGHT (FINLAND)

RUSLAN CHAGAEV, HEAVYWEIGHT (UZBEKISTAN)

ILUNGA MAKUBA, CRUISERWEIGHT (CONGO)

ISAAC CHILEMBA, LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT (MALAWI)

MIKKEL KESSLER, SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT (DENMARK)

LUCIAN BUTE, SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT (ROMANIA)

SAKIO BIKA, SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT (CAMEROON)

SHARIF BOGERE, LIGHTWEIGHT (UGANDA)

CHRIS JOHN, FEATHERWEIGHT (INDONESIA)

NICHOLAS WALTERS, FEATHERWEIGHT (JAMAICA)

KIKO MARTINEZ, JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT (SPAIN)

JHONATAN ROMERO, JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT (COLOMBIA)

ANSELMO MORENO, BANTAMWEIGHT (PANAMA)

JOSEPH AGBEKO, BANTAMWEIGHT (GHANA)

PAULUS AMBUNDA, BANTAMWEIGHT (NAMIBIA)

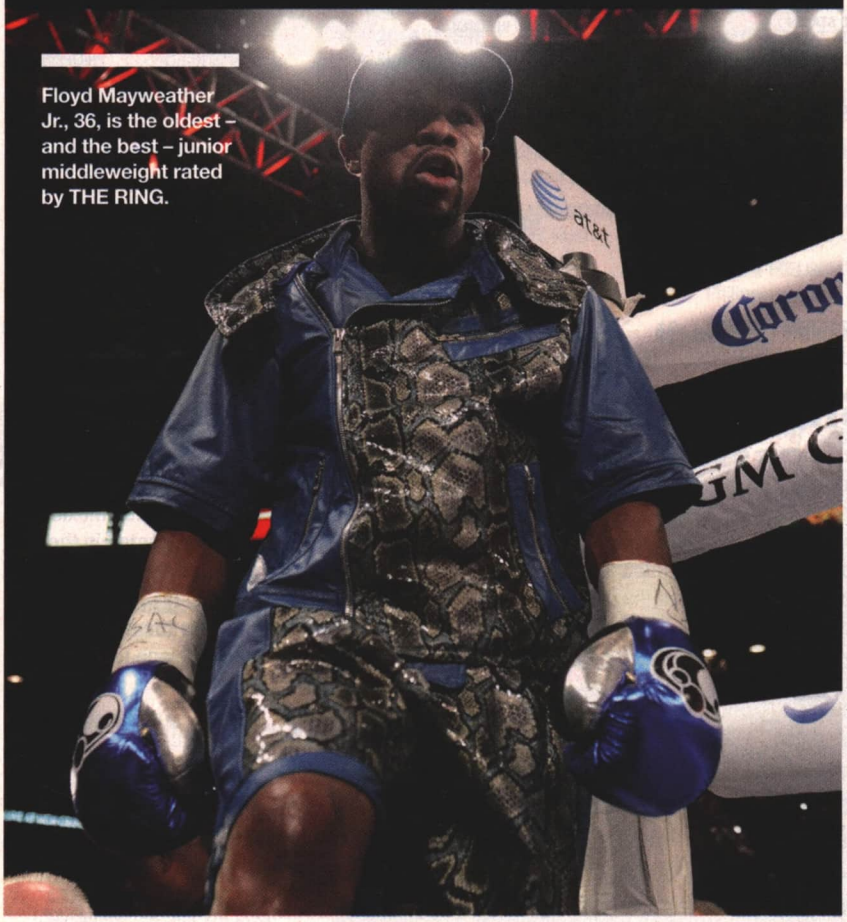
ALBERTO ROSSEL, JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT (PERU)

XIONG ZHAO ZHONG, STRAWWEIGHT (CHINA)

FOCUS ON . . .

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

A breakdown of THE RING Top 10 in one division each month, plus a list of fighters on the cusp of breaking through. This month: the 154-pounders.



Floyd Mayweather Jr., 36, is the oldest – and the best – junior middleweight rated by THE RING.

MOST WEEKS RATED: VANES MARTIROSYAN **208**

FEWEST WEEKS RATED: JERMELL CHARLO **5**

OLDEST: FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR. **36**

YOUNGEST: CHARLO **23**

MOST FIGHTS: MAYWEATHER **45**

FEWEST FIGHTS: DEMETRIUS ANDRADE **20**

HIGHEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: (TIE) MAYWEATHER, DEMETRIUS ANDRADE AND CHARLO **100 PERCENT**

LOWEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: CARLOS MOLINA **76 PERCENT**

MOST KOS: MIGUEL COTTO **31**

FEWEST KOS: MOLINA **6**

LONGEST WINNING STREAK: MAYWEATHER **45 FIGHTS**

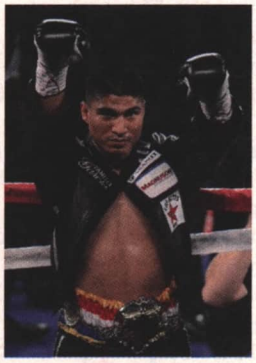
ON THE POUND-FOR-POUND LIST: MAYWEATHER **(NO. 1)** AND CANELO ALVAREZ **(NO. 9)**

TITLEHOLDERS IN THE TOP 10: MAYWEATHER (RING, WBC, WBA), MOLINA (IBF) AND ANDRADE (WBO)

ON THE CUSP (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): ALFREDO ANGULO, ZAURBEK BAYSANGUROV, CORNELIUS BUNDRAGE, JAMES KIRKLAND AND SERGEY RABCHENKO

OLD SCHOOL 8

THE RING staff members' current champions in the original eight weight classes.



Mikey Garcia is the top lightweight/ junior lightweight on two of our three lists.

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL RING MAGAZINE EDITOR

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LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: ANDRE WARD
MIDDLEWEIGHT: SERGIO MARTINEZ
WELTERWEIGHT: FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
LIGHTWEIGHT: MIKEY GARCIA
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Note: *This is how the weights break down: Heavyweight includes cruiserweight, light heavyweight includes super middleweight, all divisions middleweight through flyweight include the "junior" versions, and flyweight also includes strawweight.*

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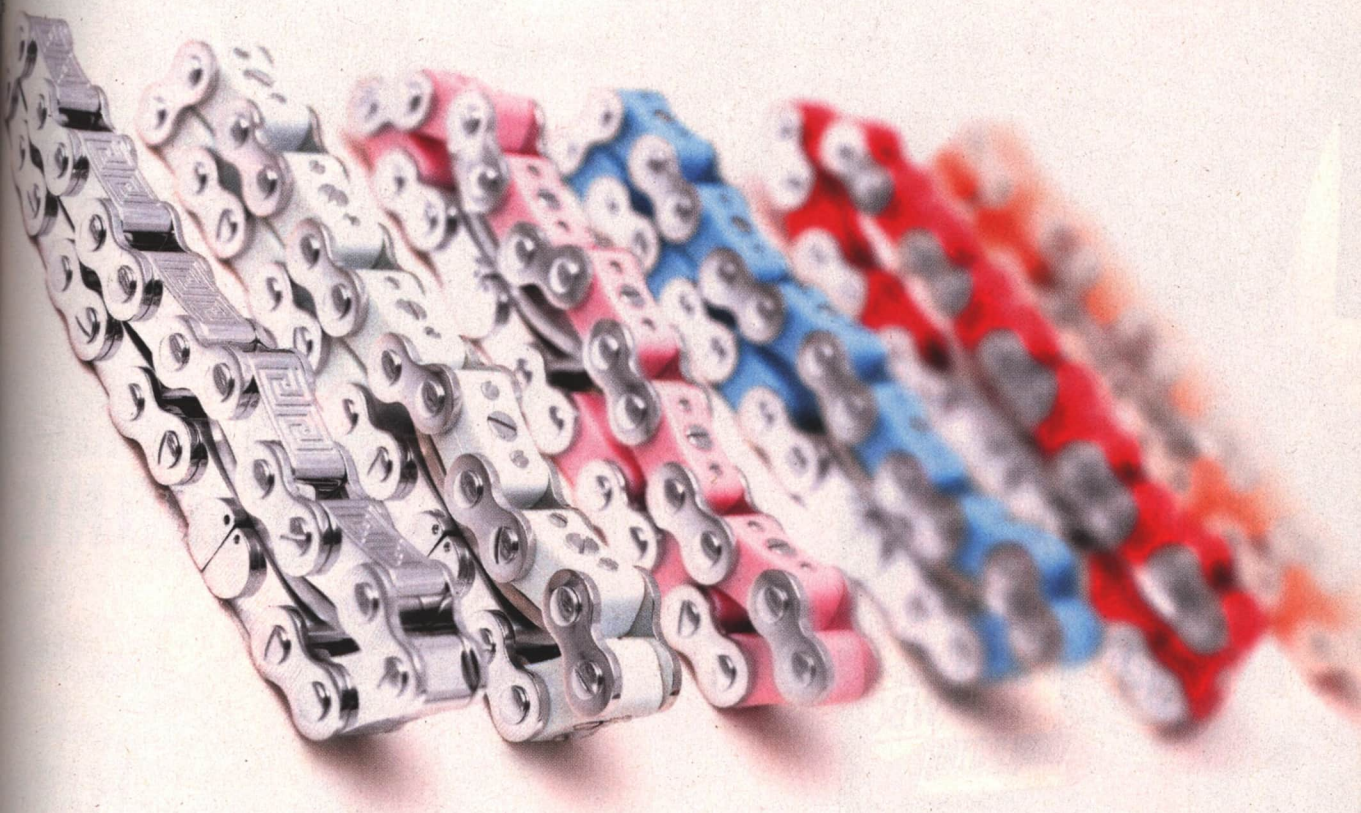

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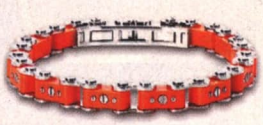

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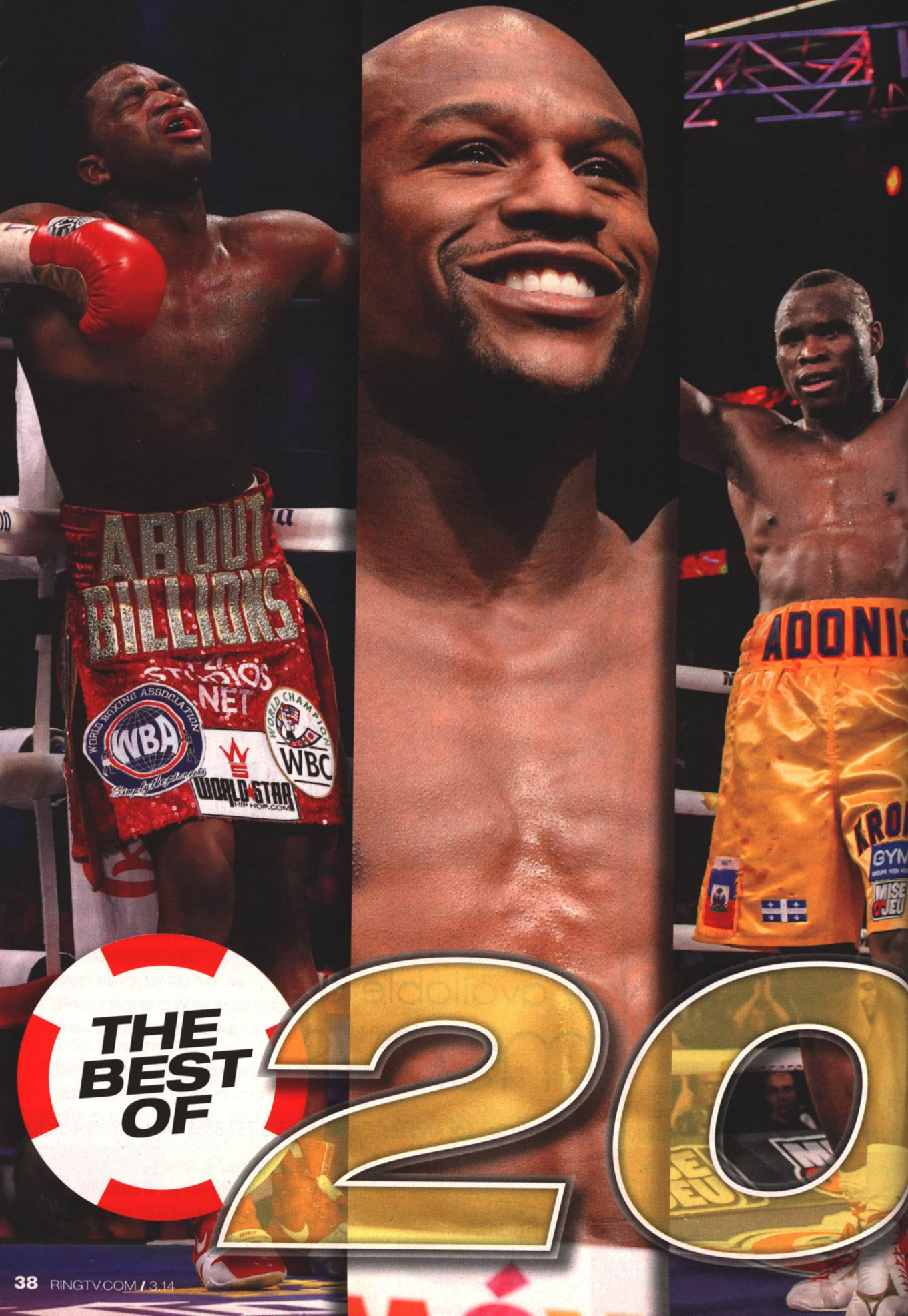


THE BEST OF 2013

THE 85TH ANNUAL *RING* AWARDS

The past year was one of the most successful for boxing in recent memory. Great performances, great fights, great events and memorable stories seemed to be the norm for 2013. Here are the best of a very good lot.

From left to right, Adrien Broner, Floyd Mayweather Jr., Adonis Stevenson, Manny Pacquiao, Timothy Bradley and Ruslan Provodnikov all served up drama in the past year.

BY MICHAEL ROSENTHAL

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

ADONIS STEVENSON

The late, great trainer Emanuel Steward wouldn't have been surprised at all. Steward knew what protégé Adonis Stevenson was capable of. And now we know, too.

Stevenson was armed with Steward's confidence in him and an abundance of talent – including crushing power – when he stepped into the ring to face RING light heavyweight champion Chad Dawson on June 8 at Bell Centre in Montreal, near Stevenson's hometown.

Dawson saw the fight as what he called a "tune-up." Stevenson turned it into a launching pad.

The fight had barely begun when Stevenson landed an enormous left hand to the side of Dawson's head that knocked the overconfident champion onto his back and rattled his brain. Dawson was able to get to his feet but, his legs wobbly and his eyes glassy, he couldn't continue.

Stevenson had changed his career and life in only 76 seconds.

Adonis Stevenson knocked out each of his four opponents in a breakthrough year.

"When the opportunity came to fight Chad Dawson, I jumped on that fight," Stevenson told THE RING. "I believed in myself, because of Emanuel. He believed in me and he knows what he's talking about."

Of course, Stevenson did more than just knock out Chad Dawson in 2013.

In March, about five months after Steward died, he stopped Darnell Boone in six rounds to avenge the only loss in his career. In September, he proved he's more than just a power puncher by thoroughly outboxing former titleholder Tavoris Cloud, who quit on his stool after seven rounds with cuts over both eyes and no hope of winning the fight.

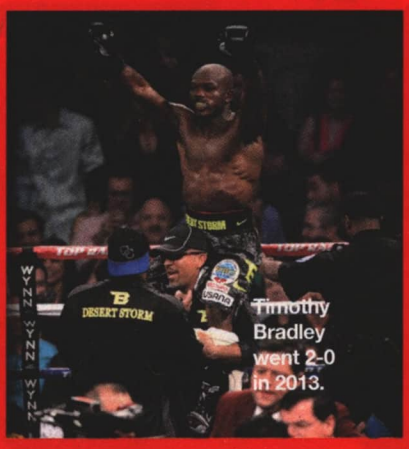
And in November, he put the capable Tony Bellew away in six rounds to complete a perfect year – four fights, four knockouts, four reasons to consider Stevenson one of the best fighters in the world.

Not bad for a onetime street fighter who took up the sport at 27 and turned pro at an unheard-of 29, the result of a four-year prison term for pimping and assault that apparently transformed him.

Stevenson emerged from incarceration determined to be a better person and make something of himself. He soon found boxing, realized that he had unusual gifts and set about working hard to achieve fame and fortune even with the odds stacked against him.

That punching power helped. Stevenson knocked out 10 of his first 13 opponents, was stopped by Boone in two rounds in 2010, took a year off and then became unstoppable.

He knocked out each of his last 10 opponents in a 2½-year period to become, in order, a contender, a champion, and a star. Stevenson's nickname is "Superman." How appropriate. •



Timothy Bradley went 2-0 in 2013.

TIMOTHY BRADLEY

Bradley proved in a war against rugged Ruslan Provodnikov that he could win as much with his heart as his skills. Then he outboxed the master, Juan Manuel Marquez, to remove any doubt about his place among the best in the sport.

SERGEY KOVALEV

Kovalev duplicated Adonis Stevenson's feat – four fights, four knockouts. None of his foes – Gabriel Campillo, Cornelius White, Nathan Cleverly and Ismayl Sillakh – saw the fifth round, giving the Russian a fearsome reputation.

FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.

Mayweather fought twice for the first year since 2007. The results were typical. Robert Guerrero and Canelo Alvarez had decent credentials but not the skills to cope with the unique tools "Money" brings to the ring.

GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX

The former amateur star had only 11 pro fights when he took on Nonito Donaire, who was on most pound-for-pound lists, yet outclassed him to win the RING junior featherweight title. He followed with a shutout of Joseph Agbeko.

BY KEITH IDEC

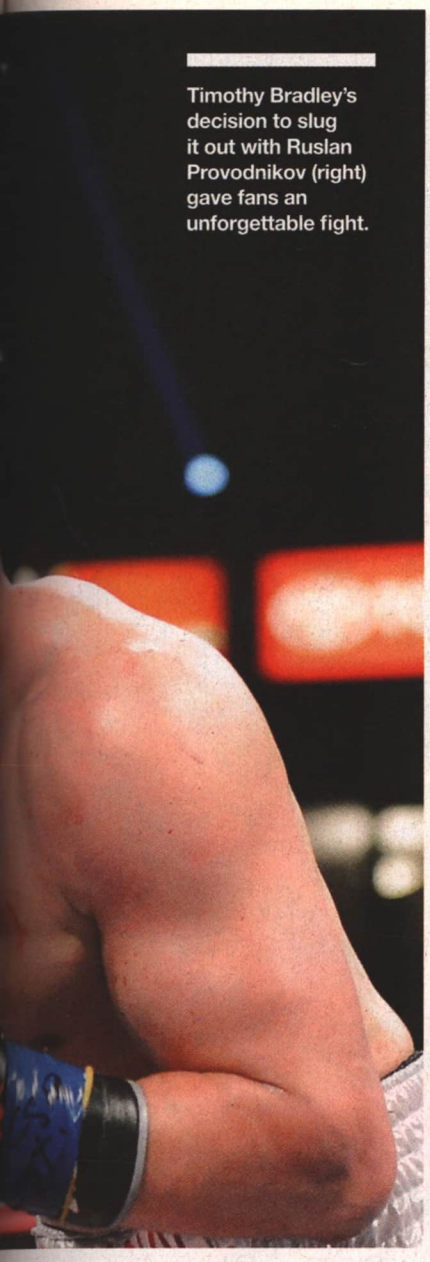
FIGHT OF THE YEAR

TIMOTHY BRADLEY VS. RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV

It took all of about five minutes the night of March 16 to realize we were watching something special.

Timothy Bradley evidently was determined to show fans after the disappointing reaction to his victory over Manny Pacquiao that he could fight – and win – like a warrior. And Ruslan Provodnikov, a born brawler, was more than happy to oblige him in what became THE RING's 2013 Fight of the Year.

In most fights, Bradley's brave comeback from serious second-round trouble against the relentless



Timothy Bradley's decision to slug it out with Ruslan Provodnikov (right) gave fans an unforgettable fight.

Provodnikov would've been more than enough to satisfy fans. But seeing Bradley battle back off the ropes when it appeared as though he was out on his feet was just one of many memorable moments in a 12-round welterweight brawl at StubHub Center in Carson, Calif.

A rejuvenated Bradley began taking control of the fight during the third, fourth and fifth rounds, only to find himself in the same dangerous position that he somehow survived in the second again late the sixth. Provodnikov hurt Bradley badly in a neutral corner with about 35 seconds left in the round, yet the ever-stubborn Bradley boxed strictly on instinct and courage long enough to reach the end of that ordeal, too.

By the ninth round, Bradley regained complete command by punishing Provodnikov to the body and opening a bad cut over the rugged Russian's left eye. Bradley battered Provodnikov with such regularity in the 10th round that trainer Freddie Roach told his fighter he'd stop the fight if Provodnikov didn't show signs of making the match more competitive.

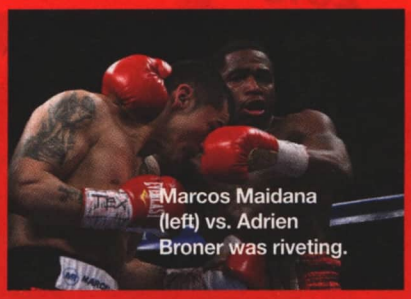
An equally resilient Provodnikov responded by buzzing Bradley in the 11th round, hurting him several times in the 12th and finally flooring the unbeaten WBO welterweight champion with 13 seconds left in the fight.

The unbelievably durable Bradley answered referee Pat Russell's count, though, and deservedly retained his title by unanimous decision even though Provodnikov hurt him in the first, second, sixth and 12th rounds.

"Even though I got rocked, I still fight hard," Bradley told HBO's Max Kellerman after the spectacular slugfest. "I still fight back. That's just the warrior in me."

Provodnikov's performance instantly made him an action star, even in defeat. The 30-year-old Bradley suffered a severe concussion during the fight and visited several brain specialists before resuming his career.

Prior to defeating Mexican legend Juan Manuel Marquez in his next fight, on Oct. 12 in Las Vegas, Bradley admitted he had forgotten much of what occurred during his fight against Provodnikov. Bradley might not remember much from that legendary night, but thankful fight fans will never forget it. •



Marcos Maidana (left) vs. Adrien Broner was riveting.

MARCOS MAIDANA-ADRIEN BRONER

Maidana mauled the heavily favored Broner as soon as the bell rang and dropped him in the second and eighth rounds. Maidana won a unanimous decision in a fan-friendly fight that featured numerous exciting exchanges Dec. 14 in San Antonio.

GUILLERMO JONES-DENIS LEBEDEV

In spite of grotesque swelling surrounding his right eye, Lebedev was winning this brutal battle on all three scorecards before Jones stopped the Russian southpaw in the 11th round of a cruiserweight classic May 17 in Moscow.

OMAR FIGUEROA-NIHITO ARAKAWA

Figueroa won by wide margins on all three scorecards – 119-107, 118-108, 118-108 – yet Japan's Arakawa withstood knockdowns in the second and sixth rounds and often tagged the defensively deficient Figueroa in an action-packed lightweight war July 27 in San Antonio.

GIOVANI SEGURA-HERNAN MARQUEZ

These Mexican southpaws produced some stunning savagery in their fantastic flyweight fight Nov. 2 in Hermosillo, Mexico. Segura was winning a very competitive, compelling bout before his crushing left hook knocked out Marquez in the 12th round.

BY BART BARRY

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

ADONIS STEVENSON KO 1 CHAD DAWSON

At a press conference before their June 8 match at Bell Centre in Montreal, career super middleweight Adonis "Superman" Stevenson promised RING light heavyweight champion "Bad" Chad Dawson he would knock him out cold. Dawson laughed the suggestion off, saying Stevenson was such an unknown he had to google him when the fight was announced.

Known or otherwise, Stevenson was a man of his word. Barely a minute into their match, he knocked Dawson on the canvas, and at 1:16 of the first round, "Superman" was the new light heavyweight champion of the world.

Stevenson, a southpaw, threw the left cross that changed both men's lives more like a heavyweight would than a 175-pounder. It was the sort of large punch a man throws when he is unafraid of another man's reflexes. Stevenson didn't run Dawson into the punch, the way men in lighter weight divisions generally do, but rather golfed Dawson's head like it was on a tee, stepping into the punch and smashing his fist against the right side of Dawson's face as if it were a stationary object.

It appeared to be an audacious

Adonis Stevenson (left) took away our breath and Chad Dawson's RING championship with one monumental punch.

calculation Stevenson made in the early days of his training camp with trainer Javon "Sugar" Hill, nephew and protégé of the late Emanuel Steward, a calculation to test Dawson's chin before the champion was fully warmed. How else to explain the fearlessness with which Stevenson strode at a man heavily favored to beat him?

The knuckles of Stevenson's left fist collided along the jawline between Dawson's right ear and the tip of his chin, a blunt strike more than a precise one, and landed with the incredible concussive force that has become Stevenson's signature – a force that traumatizes whatever it hits flush. Dawson's upper body swayed leftward from the collision and then snapped reflexively rightward as he collapsed on the canvas.

Those who believed Dawson's southpaw stance might offset Stevenson's power had forgotten what Stevenson's left cross did to southpaw Jesus Gonzales in 2012, when a first-round connection put Gonzales on his back, legs jutting outward and arms swimming involuntarily overhead. Dawson's legs did the same, though his eyes remained open, completing a look of thorough disbelief – boxing's telltale sign of a scrambled brain.

Dawson rose before the count of seven, shuffled rigidly backward and replied to referee Michael Griffin's inquiries by addressing not Griffin but a spot beyond Griffin's left shoulder. Griffin liked nothing about Dawson's posture, and after considering the potentially tragic consequences of even one more Stevenson blow, Griffin wisely waved the fight off.

Stevenson leaped round the ring like a banshee in Kronk-yellow satin, hopping and surging and kicking and skipping, hugging anyone in range of his muscular arms. It was a wonderful and sincere expression of mindless euphoria. It was also a moment of profound vindication for the 35-year-old Haitian, fighting before a supportive Canadian crowd in his adopted home province of Quebec.

Every prizefighter, nay any man who has even stood before a heavy bag, imagines becoming a world champion with one punch. Adonis "Superman" Stevenson lived that very moment and scored THE RING'S 2013 Knockout of the Year. •

Jhonny Gonzalez (right) stunned Abner Mares.

JHONNY GONZALEZ KO 1 ABNER MARES

Mexican Gonzalez surprised the boxing world by stopping featherweight titlist Mares at 2:55 of Round 1 on Aug. 24 at StubHub Center in Carson, Calif. The veteran slugger dropped Mares with a left-hook lead before felling him a second and final time.

LUCAS MATTHYSSE KO 3 LAMONT PETERSON

Argentine junior welterweight Matthysse ruined Peterson on May 18 in Atlantic City, N.J., dropping him in the second round with a well-timed right cross and taking his will with a left hook that ended their title bout at 2:14 of the third round.

GENNADY GOLOVKIN KO 3 NOBUHIRO ISHIDA

Kazakhstani middleweight titlist Golovkin hammered Japan's Ishida on March 30 in Monte Carlo. The end came at 2:20 of Round 3 when, with a left uppercut-right cross combination, Golovkin left Ishida unconscious and partially draped over a scorer's table.

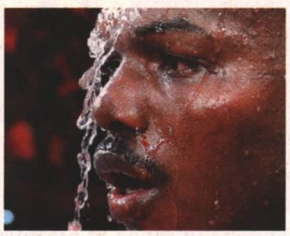
CURTIS STEVENS KO 1 SAUL ROMAN

Two and a half minutes into their middleweight match on Aug. 3 in Uncasville, Conn., American Stevens and Mexican Roman each started left hooks at one another's heads. Stevens' got there first, Roman dropped flat, and no 10-count was needed.

BY JACOB SIROF

ROUND OF THE YEAR

TIMOTHY BRADLEY VS. RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV, ROUND 6



After watching two rounds of WBO welterweight champion Timothy Bradley's battle with Ruslan Provodnikov on March 16, Bradley's wife and mother had seen enough. They left their ringside seats. It's a safe bet that nobody else in the moderate-sized crowd followed suit.

Bradley had been badly hurt in Rounds 1 and 2, largely because he opted to fight a decidedly "un-Bradley" fight. He stood in the pocket and exchanged with the hard-punching Siberian. Nobody expected this. Least of all Bradley's long-time trainer Joel Diaz, whose furious admonishments in the corner convinced Bradley to change his strategy. For the next three

Timothy Bradley (right) came back from the brink in a gripping Round 6.

rounds, he boxed smartly, landing combinations, moving in and out. Bradley was in control.

Then came Round 6.

There are moments in boxing that are etched in our minds forever. Little visual poems that stick with us like the verses of our favorite songs. Ali yelling over Sonny Liston after the "phantom punch," Roberto Duran turning away from Sugar Ray Leonard in the "No Mas" fight, Mike Tyson's "triple-knockdown" of Trevor Berbick.

The first two minutes and 25 seconds of Round 6 offered no indication that we were about to be served up another "moment" to add to the list. They looked much like the previous three rounds, with Bradley, the busier and more mobile fighter, outworking the dangerous slugger. Still, it was hardly one-way traffic. Both men landed powerful body blows. Although the champion seemed to be getting the better of the exchanges, the action was sustained and thrilling. With 35 seconds to go, however, observers learned to rethink their definition of the word "thrilling."

Provodnikov threw a left hook that couldn't have found Bradley's chin more accurately were it guided by GPS. Bradley fell into the ropes. They clinched, and then Provodnikov landed two massive right hands to the head of an already-stunned Bradley. Here's where the fun begins. Bradley, with his back yet again against the ropes and apparently ready to go at any time, began throwing punches. A lot of them. Provodnikov matched his efforts, and for the last 17 seconds of the round, neither man moved (or left) his feet. They exchanged shots at a rate that makes one question how the good folks at CompuBox could possibly track them in real time. The fighters looked as though they were being controlled by a couple of 9-year-olds mashing buttons on video game controllers. And so we had it: Our new "moment."

HBO commentator Jim Lampley roared at the TV audience, imploring them. "Look at this! Look at this!" We're looking, Jim. We're looking. How can we not? •

MICKEY BEY VS. JOHN MOLINA, ROUND 10

Bey boxed beautifully, winning every minute of every round. Well, except for that pesky last minute of the final round. Molina's come-from-behind TKO victory is the stuff of which movies are made. When small children stage pretend boxing matches, they don't dare go this dramatic.

OMAR FIGUEROA VS. NIHITO ARAKAWA, ROUND 3

If the point of boxing is to hit and not be hit, these two lightweights clearly never got the memo. Clinches? Jabs? Who needs 'em? In a brutal and entertaining fight that miraculously went the 12-round distance, Figueroa ultimately dominated, but Round 3 was the most evenly contested.

JAMES KIRKLAND VS. GLEN TAPIA, ROUND 1

What became a frightening beatdown of the courageous Tapia began as a competitive, exhilarating contest. Tapia came out guns blazing, landing shots that would've put most men to sleep. But "Mandingo Warrior" is NOT most men. The final minute of the round would set the tone for the rest of the fight.

MIKE MOLLO VS. ARTUR SZPILKA I, ROUND 4

Mollo was being picked apart all night, both by Szpilka and by the strangely biased ref. He'd eventually be stopped in Round 6, but in the fourth, with blood pouring into both eyes from horrific cuts, Mollo floored the undefeated Szpilka with a savage left hook. Amazing stuff.

BY BART BARRY

UPSET OF THE YEAR

MARCOS MAIDANA UD 12 ADRIEN BRONER

The last major fight card of the year was one headlined by a main event, welterweight titlist Adrien Broner vs. Marcos Maidana, expected to be so uncompetitive that aficionados spent the buildup choosing which preliminary match might steal the show.

The Adrien Broner show, an ongoing effort to coronate "The Problem" as Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s heir to the pound-for-pound throne, got stolen all right – just not by an undercard fighter. Instead it was Marcos Maidana, the taciturn slugger from Argentina, who took Broner's '0' and razed the small kingdom being built around the Broner name on an unforgettable night Dec. 14 in San Antonio.

It is rare to see an expression of genuine hatred in a championship prizefight, as such an emotion generally subverts a fighter's conditioning. But genuine hatred is what Maidana showed at the opening bell of his Alamodome match with Broner, rushing out of his corner and assaulting his opponent with tactics seen more often in a schoolyard than a prizefighting ring. And Broner had no defense for them but hot-dogging stunts and exaggerated expressions of calm.

Maidana, who used what very few words he spoke in the fight's promotion to say he didn't like anything about Broner and looked forward to sinking his knuckles in the man's flesh, dropped Broner in Round 2 with a left-hook lead. It was a punch Maidana landed an incredible number of times, given the combatants' assumed disparity in quickness, and a punch for which Broner made nary a defensive adjustment in 36 minutes.

After applying his only tactical alteration in the match, a fifth-round effort to walk down the Argentine and fight him at close range, muffling Maidana's punches, Broner got dropped a second time in Round 8 by yet another left hook. Broner rose, and Maidana butted him, elbowed him and hit him on a break, sending Broner on a corner search for an escape hatch from the sort of fight his conditioning had not anticipated. Texas referee Laurence Cole deducted a point from Maidana's tally but told Broner to return to his feet and return to fighting.

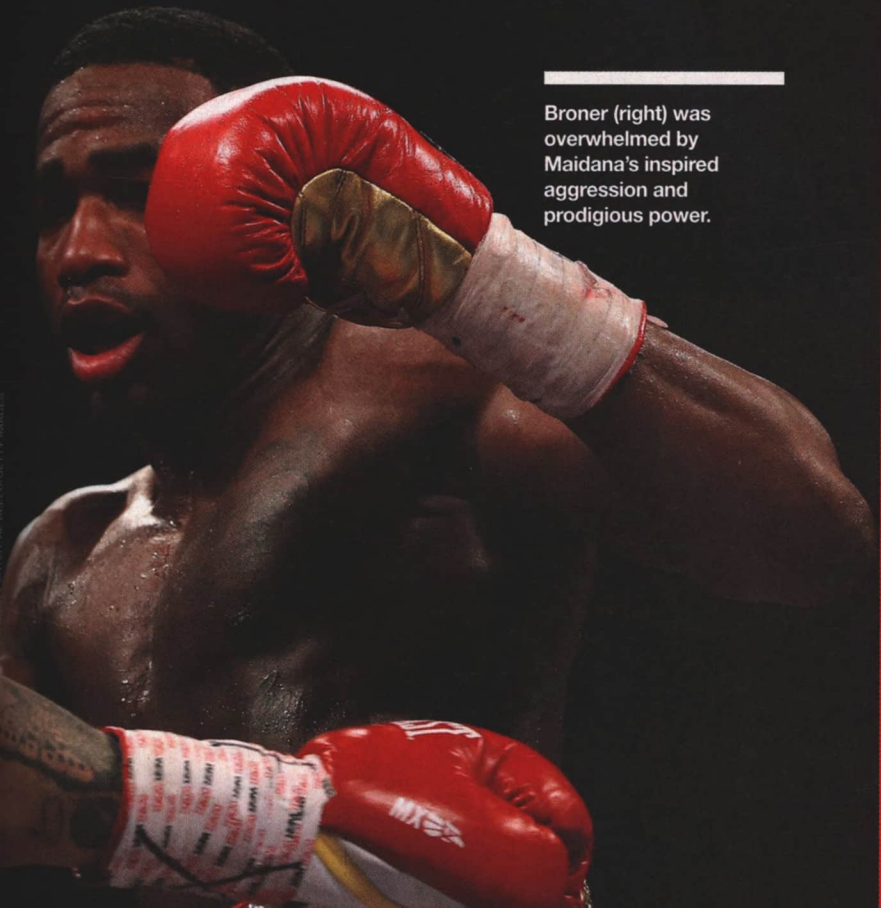
To his credit, Broner, who forewent his usual post-fight performance antics to climb in an ambulance bound for a local hospital, acquitted himself nobly in the championship rounds, fighting Maidana on even terms, despite wearing a beaten look on his previously pristine countenance. Texas, often maligned for judging that favors the favorite,

Marcos Maidana earned his crown by stunning Adrien Broner and the boxing world.

scored for the Argentine underdog by unanimous and fairly wide margins: 117-109, 115-109 and 115-110.

After the fight, Maidana addressed for nearly an hour a surprisingly large contingent of Argentine reporters who had braved storms and other winter calamities to visit the Alamo City and cover one of their nation's best-known prizefighters. All week members of the Argentine press corps had worn mischievous glints in their eyes, whether at a public workout, a final press conference or the weigh-in, as if they knew their man was better than American oddsmakers believed.

Whether the Argentines were right about Maidana or others were wrong about Broner, the beating Maidana put on Broner was upsetting to a large number of experts and prognosticators. And it was also THE RING'S 2013 Upset of the Year. •



Broner (right) was overwhelmed by Maidana's inspired aggression and prodigious power.

JHONNY GONZALEZ-ABNER MARES

Gonzalez was expected to be a soft touch for undefeated Mares on Aug. 24 in Carson, Calif. Gonzalez provided that touch in the form of a left hook, but it was not a soft one. At 2:55 of Round 1, Mares had his first defeat, and Gonzalez had a remarkable upset on his ledger.

SIMPIWE VETYEKA-CHRIS JOHN

Unheralded South African Vetyeka went to Western Australia on Dec. 6 and in six rounds unraveled John, the undefeated Indonesian who had successfully defended his world title 18 times. Like Ricky Hatton did to Kostya Tszyu in 2005, Vetyeka made John quit on his stool.

ADONIS STEVENSON-CHAD DAWSON

Called a "stepping stone" by American Dawson before their June 8 fight in Montreal's Bell Centre, Haitian-Canadian Stevenson stepped all over Dawson, stopping him with one punch at 1:16 of the first round to win the RING light heavyweight championship.

SHAWN PORTER-DEVON ALEXANDER

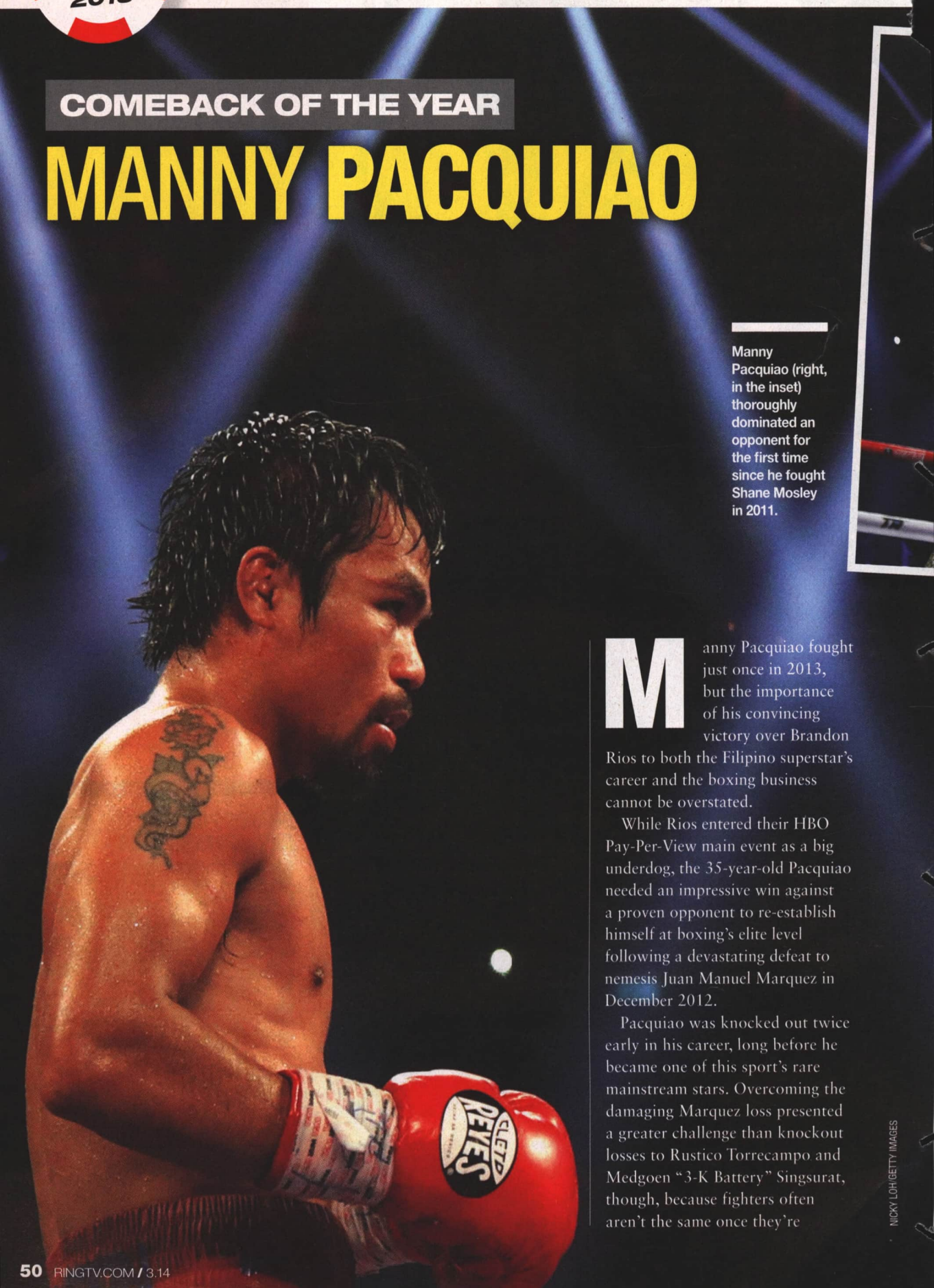
Shawn Porter outworked Devon Alexander.

When American welterweights Alexander and Porter met on Dec. 7 in Brooklyn, N.Y., the fight was expected to grant Alexander an opportunity to put himself in the sweepstakes to fight Floyd Mayweather Jr. Instead, Porter decisioned Alexander unanimously.

BY KEITH IDEC

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

MANNY PACQUIAO



Manny Pacquiao (right, in the inset) thoroughly dominated an opponent for the first time since he fought Shane Mosley in 2011.

Manny Pacquiao fought just once in 2013, but the importance of his convincing victory over Brandon Rios to both the Filipino superstar's career and the boxing business cannot be overstated.

While Rios entered their HBO Pay-Per-View main event as a big underdog, the 35-year-old Pacquiao needed an impressive win against a proven opponent to re-establish himself at boxing's elite level following a devastating defeat to nemesis Juan Manuel Marquez in December 2012.

Pacquiao was knocked out twice early in his career, long before he became one of this sport's rare mainstream stars. Overcoming the damaging Marquez loss presented a greater challenge than knockout losses to Rustico Torrecampo and Medgoen "3-K Battery" Singsurat, though, because fighters often aren't the same once they're

NICKY LOH/GETTY IMAGES

knocked unconscious, especially at Pacquiao's age.

By taking Rios' hardest shots well on Nov. 24 in Macau, China, Pacquiao proved that nearly a year between bouts helped him recover from the crushing Marquez right hand that put him face-first on the canvas in the sixth round of their fourth fight.

Thus, Pacquiao has won THE RING's Comeback of the Year award.

Pacqauio's comeback didn't just help him and his promoter, Top Rank Inc., make millions, it enhanced the overall health of the sport. The Rios fight didn't do the type of big business Pacquiao pay-per-view shows typically produce, but he remains one of boxing's biggest draws and generates interest in boxing.

A third straight defeat would've removed Pacquiao (55-5-2, 38 KOs) from the sport's top level. A win enabled one of the most popular boxers of this era to continue toward at least one more meaningful, high-profile fight in 2014.

Economics aside, Pacquiao provided an emotional lift for his hurting countrymen by beating Rios, too.

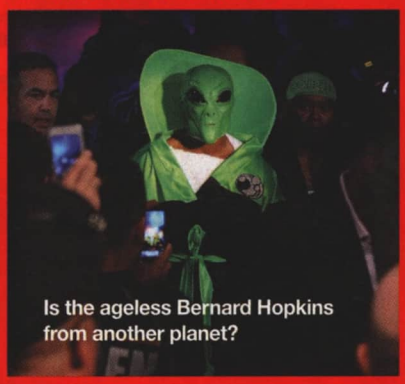
Nothing accomplished inside a boxing ring could change the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan, which ravaged parts of the Philippines two weeks before the Pacquiao-Rios fight. It was clear, however, that Pacquiao's win provided something positive to fellow Filipinos at a time when they desperately needed a respite from their grief, however temporary.

Pacquiao dedicated the Rios fight to those affected by the typhoon, which killed at least 6,000 people and affected roughly 11 million residents of the Philippines, where Pacquiao is a congressman and one of the country's most influential figures. Taking that additional pressure into his comeback bout made winning all the more significant. •

JHONNY GONZALEZ

The heavy-handed Mexican featherweight knocked out favored and previously unbeaten Abner Mares in the first round Aug. 24 in Carson, Calif. Gonzalez lost his last fight in 2012, an eight-round technical decision to Daniel Ponce De Leon, but went 3-0 in 2013.

BERNARD HOPKINS



Is the ageless Bernard Hopkins from another planet?

Hopkins bounced back from his loss to Chad Dawson in 2012 to become the oldest boxer to win a major world title. After defeating Tavoris Cloud on March 9 in Brooklyn, N.Y., Hopkins successfully defended the IBF light heavyweight title against Karo Murat on Oct. 26 in Atlantic City.

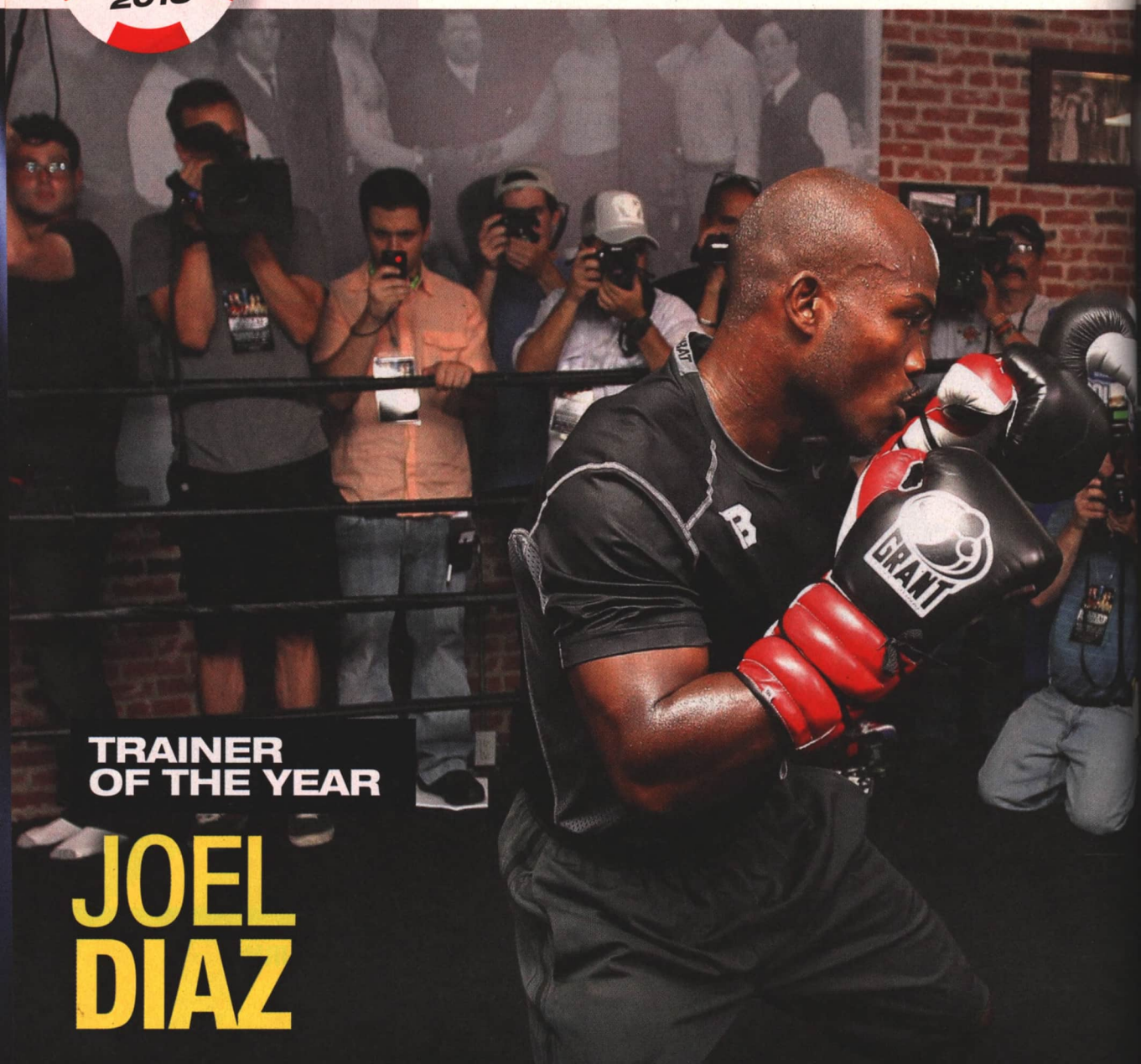
FELIX STURM

After losing a split decision to Daniel Geale in September 2012, Sturm stopped then-undefeated Pedrag Radosevic in the fourth round July 6 in Dortmund, Germany. Then he stopped Darren Barker in the second round to win the IBF middleweight belt Dec. 7 in Stuttgart, Germany.

AKIRA YAEGASHI

The Japanese fighter lost his only bout in 2012, but won each of his four fights in 2013. The former strawweight champion's second win of the year, a unanimous-decision victory over Japan's Toshiyuki Igarashi, earned Yaegashi the RING and WBC flyweight titles.

BY JACOB SIROF



TRAINER OF THE YEAR

JOEL DIAZ

Round 6 of Timothy Bradley vs. Ruslan Provodnikov is THE RING's Round of the Year, but Joel Diaz was not as impressed as we were. In fact, immediately after the round was over, the seasoned trainer told his charge that he was going to stop the fight if Bradley continued to take unnecessary punishment. We hear stuff like this from trainers all the time, and most often we dismiss it as motivational rhetoric. But in this instance, something was different. Joel Diaz MEANT it. And if he didn't, he was certainly convincing. Both to fans watching at home who wanted desperately to see this war play out, and, more importantly, to Bradley, who got back to the game plan and won the fight by unanimous decision.

Many boxing insiders questioned what the Provodnikov war had taken out of Bradley. Diaz never did. Seven months later, he would guide the WBO welterweight champ to a decisive points victory over future Hall of Famer Juan Manuel Marquez, who was coming off a career-defining KO of Manny Pacquiao. His prized pupil boxed beautifully for 12 rounds, and earned a spot as the consensus No. 3 pound-for-pound boxer in the world.

Diaz also trains lightweight Omar Figueroa, arguably the most exciting contender in the division (or any other, for that matter). Figueroa fought three times in 2013, and made progress in each outing. He scored two first-round KOs — the second over Puerto Rican prospect Abner Cotto in what was expected to be a competitive fight — and fought through hand injuries to beat an impossibly tough

Trainer Joel Diaz (right) guided Timothy Bradley to victories over Ruslan Provodnikov and Juan Manuel Marquez, and had success with other fighters.

Nihito Arakawa in a 12-round unanimous decision.

In April, after junior lightweight prospect Diego Magdaleno suffered his first loss at the hands of Roman "Rocky" Martinez, he turned to Diaz to right the ship. To date, they have one fight together, and one win. Diego's younger bother Jessie, a real blue-chipper at junior featherweight, also joined Diaz's stable in Indio, Calif., and they quickly racked up two KO victories together.

Diaz is no stranger to the "boxing brothers" dynamic, being one of three siblings to make a mark in the professional ranks himself. He currently trains his brother, former lightweight champion Julio Diaz, who traveled to England to face Amir Khan in April. Make no mistake: Team Diaz was there as the B-side. But Julio knocked Khan down (and almost out) in the fourth round of a close fight that was supposed to be a showcase for the hometown hero.

It's been said that a trainer is only as good as his fighter, but a case could easily be made the other way. If one were inclined to do so, Joel Diaz's 2013 wouldn't be a bad start. •

Freddie Roach had a strong year.

FREDDIE ROACH

Following a pretty bleak 2012, Roach rose from the ashes, silencing those who said his best training days were behind him. Among his achievements: Manny Pacquiao's utter dominance of Brandon Rios, the apparent return of the "real" Miguel Cotto and the emergence of Ruslan Provodnikov as an unlikely star.

FLOYD MAYWEATHER SR.

After taking the reins back from brother Roger, "Big Floyd" led his son to wins over Robert Guerrero and Canelo Alvarez in 2013, marking the first time Junior fought twice in a calendar year since 2007. And it could be argued that "The Money Team" didn't lose a round.

JAVAN "SUGAR" HILL

When his uncle/mentor Emanuel Steward passed away, Hill stepped into some very large shoes. They seem to fit him nicely. His inherited student Adonis Stevenson won four times in 2013 (all by KO), picking up a world title and becoming THE RING's Fighter of the Year along the way.

ANGEL GARCIA

Say what you want about Angel Garcia — seriously, go ahead; he'd say it about you — but he and son Danny continue to defy skeptics, beating everyone placed in front of them. In 2013, that was former champ Zab Judah and the monster-punching Argentine, Lucas Matthysse.

BY DOUG FISCHER

PROSPECT OF THE YEAR

VASYL LOMACHENKO

No other prospect made a bigger statement in a single fight in 2013 than Vasyl Lomachenko did with his fourth-round knockout of Jose Ramirez on Oct. 12.

In what was billed as his pro debut, the Ukrainian amateur superstar outboxed and overwhelmed Ramirez, a competent and determined young fringe contender who entered the bout with a 25-3 record. And, because the scheduled 10-round featherweight bout was part of the Tim Bradley-Juan Manuel Marquez telecast, an international audience was able to witness Lomachenko's dazzling defense, fast hands, fluid footwork and accurate combinations, which produced knockdowns in the first and fourth rounds.

Lomachenko also set himself up to challenge for a major world title in his very next bout. Bob Arum, CEO of Top Rank, which signed the 25-year-old southpaw in July, had hoped at press time to match him with WBO featherweight beltholder Orlando Salido in March.

For this reason, Lomachenko is THE RING's Prospect of the Year for 2013.

It's not easy for any amateur standout to live up to his reputation – especially if his accomplishments are legendary – but Lomachenko did it, and hardcore fans are clamoring to see him fight again.

However, there was some debate as to whether the impressive body-shot stoppage of Ramirez was Lomachenko's actual first professional contest. The two-time Olympic gold medalist took part in the World Series of Boxing, which matched top amateurs from various countries in national team competition. The WSB was run by AIBA, the organization that regulates Olympic boxing, which categorized the competition as "semi-pro."

But WSB participants were paid to compete, so Fight Fax Inc., boxing's chief record keeping company, counts the five-round bouts as pro fights. Lomachenko won six WSB bouts, including a razor-thin split decision over Russian rival Albert Selimov, the only man to beat him in the amateur ranks.

That bout took place in the finals of the 2007 World Amateur Championships. Lomachenko avenged the loss by beating Selimov in the first round of the 2008 Olympic tournament, which he won. He followed his Olympic gold performance by winning the 2009 World Amateur Championships, outclassing Mexico's Oscar Valdez along the way. Lomachenko also won the 2011 World Amateur Championships, beating American standout Jose Ramirez among others.

He capped his amazing amateur career by winning a gold medal in the 2012 Olympics, beating Puerto Rico's Felix Verdejo and Cuba's Yasniel Toledo in the Games.

His final amateur record: an unbelievable 396-1.

Verdejo is now 9-0 as a pro. Valdez is 8-0. Ramirez is 7-0. Depending on the record book, Lomachenko is either 1-0 or 7-0. However, whether Ramirez was his first or seventh pro opponent, dominating such an experienced fighter in a

Former amateur phenom Vasyl Lomachenko is ready to fight for a major title with almost no pro experience.

scheduled 10-round bout is an amazing accomplishment, even for a decorated Olympian.

Consider that Floyd Mayweather Jr., a 1996 Olympic bronze medalist, turned pro against a novice who was also making his pro debut. The current pound-for-pound king didn't fight in a scheduled 10-rounder until his 13th pro bout. Andre Ward, a 2004 Olympic gold medalist, turned pro against a 2-0 fighter and didn't fight in a 10-round bout until his 14th outing.

Pernell Whitaker, a 1984 Olympic gold medalist, turned pro against an 11-0 fighter and fought his first 10-rounder in his eighth pro bout. One of Lomachenko's boxing idols, Roy Jones Jr., a 1988 Olympic silver medalist and Val Barker award winner for most outstanding boxer (as Lomachenko was in 2008), debuted against a 6-15 journeyman and was seven fights into his pro career before he fought in a 10-round bout.

There's no telling if Lomachenko will come close to one day emulating the pro success of those former American amateur stars, but he has a heck of a head start. •

JERMALL CHARLO (17-0, 13 KOS)

The brother of junior middleweight contender Jermell Charlo got closer to his older (by one minute) twin's status by fighting seven times in 2013. The tall and rangy 23-year-old from Texas expertly used his height and reach to stop all of his opponents, including rugged veteran Orlando Lora.

CHRIS EUBANK JR. (12-0, 7 KOS)

The son of former super middleweight titleholder Chris Eubank is learning his craft, having picked up boxing at the advanced age of 18, but the talented 24-year-old middleweight exhibited flashes of his father's athletic brilliance and flair for showmanship in three TKO victories in 2013.

JESSIE MAGDALENO (17-0, 13 KOS)

The 22-year-old brother of junior lightweight title challenger Diego Magdaleno is on a fast track to matching his older sibling's contender status after downing four experienced opponents in 2013. Magdaleno, a former U.S. amateur standout, is an aggressive-but-skilled southpaw.

ERROL SPENCE (10-0, 8 KOS)

The 23-year-old welterweight southpaw is regarded as the most talented of the 2012 U.S. Olympians. Spence, a poised boxer-puncher, scored six first-round KOs among his eight victories in 2013 but also went the distance with then-unbeaten (15-0-1) Emmanuel Lartey over eight rounds.

BY DAVID GREISMAN

EVENT OF THE YEAR

MAYWEATHER VS. ALVAREZ

They say that records are meant to be broken, and in the case of the fight between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Canelo Alvarez on Sept. 14, they weren't just referring to both men being undefeated.

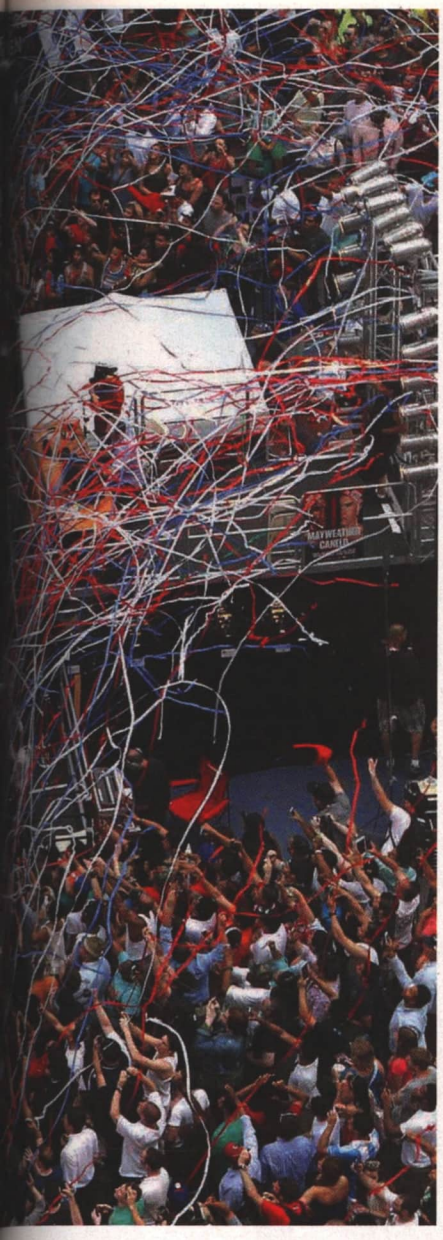
From the moment Alvarez-Mayweather was announced, people speculated whether the fight between the No. 1 star in Mexico and the No. 1 star in the United States could become the No. 1 pay-per-view seller and the No. 1 box office blockbuster.

The promoters, publicists and programmers certainly pulled out all the stops in an attempt to make that happen. The fighters traveled around the United States and to Mexico, with 10 stops over the course of nine days. The tour and other press conferences were streamed live online. And Showtime aired a four-part *All Access* series, which served as a combination documentary and commercial.

The event, titled "The One," wound up selling 2.2 million pay-per-view buys. While that fell short of the 2.53 million purchases for the 2007 fight between Mayweather and Oscar De La Hoya, a higher price tag meant Alvarez-Mayweather shattered the record for revenue. It came in at close to $150 million, surpassing the $136 million brought in by De La Hoya-Mayweather.

And that was just the income from people watching at home. In Las Vegas, 16,146 people paid for tickets at the MGM Grand, sales that brought a record gate of $20,003,150. That was more than $1.5 million better than De La Hoya-Mayweather, and that figure doesn't even include the prices for tickets sold on the secondary market.

The event also was broadcast



The Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Canelo Alvarez promotion set the all-time record for revenue.

on closed-circuit television around the city, as those who couldn't get tickets still wanted to be there in Vegas for the biggest boxing match in years. More than 26,000 paid about $100 for those showings, adding another $2.6 million to the coffers. That number alone is more than many boxing cards bring in with ticket sales.

At least 500 movie theaters around the country also showed the card.

Meanwhile in Mexico, "The One" was the highest-rated boxing broadcast ever in that country, with 77 percent of households with televisions tuning in, a total estimated audience of 22.1 million people.

That was the business side of it. There also was the boxing.

Underneath the main event was a co-feature that very well could have headlined its own broadcast. Danny Garcia and Lucas Matthysse were considered the two best junior welterweights in the world.

Garcia was undefeated at 26-0 (16 knockouts) and had beaten Erik Morales and Amir Khan in 2012, but his only bout in 2013 had been a tougher-than-expected decision win over Zab Judah. Matthysse was the bogeyman of the division. His only two losses were via split decision to Zab Judah and Devon Alexander. He'd scored knockouts in all but two of his wins. He had won six in a row by knockout, blasting through Lamont Peterson in his previous appearance.

Alvarez-Mayweather was the main event, but Garcia-Matthysse was expected to steal the show. Though it didn't wind up as explosive as anticipated, it was still a tense tussle, one that saw Garcia take a close but clear decision. Also on the televised undercard was a 154-pound title fight in which Carlos Molina won a split decision over beltholder Ishe Smith, and a bout in which Pablo Cano took a split decision over Ashley Theophane.

There have been far better undercards, and there have been far worse.

But it was the headline bout that mattered most anyway. Rare are the events that feel this big, that get both this fight city and the greater boxing world buzzing the way they did for Alvarez-Mayweather. It took five years for the last records to fall. It could be much, much longer until these records are topped. •

SHOWTIME VS. HBO

Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s move to Showtime was a publicity coup for the premium network amid its rivalry with HBO. HBO soon cut its few remaining ties to Golden Boy. The business of the sport changed, though fans still care more about getting the most for their subscriptions.

LEAL AND ABDUSALAMOV

Magomed Abdusalamov (right) vs. Mike Perez.

The dangerous nature of boxing has always been a reality, but the death of featherweight Frankie Leal in October, followed soon by heavyweight Magomed Abdusalamov's post-fight coma in November, leaves us even more aware and critical of fighter safety.

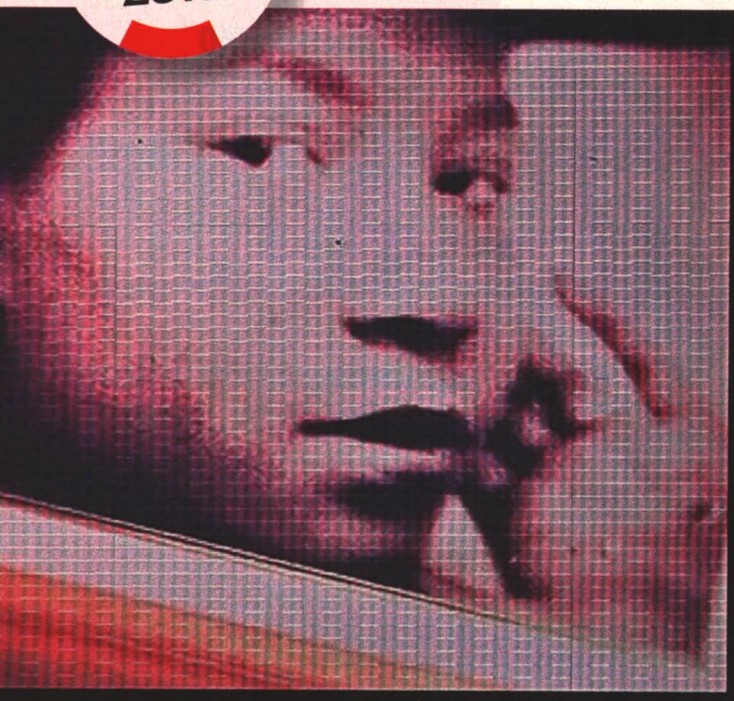
TOP RANK GOES TO CHINA

Promoters taking big fights overseas is nothing new, but this venture is notable. Top Rank put on three Macau cards in eight months, spotlighting two-time gold medalist Zou Shiming, staging Manny Pacquiao vs. Brandon Rios and expanding into a sizable and potentially lucrative Asian market.

KLITSCHKO ABDICATES

Vitali Klitschko's decision to campaign full time for Ukraine's presidency ends a five-year world title reign, one that began when he returned from a previous retirement. Given the Klitschko brothers' longtime dominance, there will now be new heavyweights vying for a spot toward the top.

BY DAVID GREISMAN



The re-invented Mike Tyson has taken his show on the road.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL

MIKE TYSON

He's been the heavyweight champion, a multimillionaire and one of the most famous fighters on the planet. And he's been a convicted criminal, an addict and a bankrupt cautionary tale of success and excess.

It was boxing that turned a teenage Mike Tyson's life around. And it is Tyson's time in boxing — both his best times and his worst times — that are helping him turn his life around again. Fame and infamy are both marketable. So it makes sense that while Tyson's accomplishments brought him into the spotlight, his past indiscretions assist in keeping him there.

That helps explain why people still want to see and hear him, why the story conveyed in the 2009 *Tyson* documentary was not enough. There also have been the appearances on *Oprah* and various other talk shows, and even a miniseries about pigeon racing, never mind the cameo appearances in two of the *Hangover* movies.

Tyson had a breakthrough year in 2013, though.

He embarked on a touring one-man show, speaking about his life to audiences around the country. One tour stop was filmed and turned into a Spike Lee-directed television special. He was the focus of a TV documentary miniseries. He released an autobiography, with his aged, tattooed face dominating the cover, his eyes conveying vulnerability. He's now promoting boxers, too.

This is much better than what we expected to happen.

Tyson was the youngest heavyweight champion ever, and then he lost in a stunning upset to Buster Douglas. Tyson soon went to prison for three years after being convicted of rape. Upon his release,

he returned to the ring, recaptured a piece of the world title, and then was defeated again, this time by Evander Holyfield. Their rematch brought the infamous ear-biting incident.

Though he continued to fight, he never truly contended again. By the time Tyson met Lennox Lewis in 2002, he had his name and his reputation, but little else. Lewis easily dispatched him. Tyson only fought three more times, his fortune gone, his fame dwindling, and he had lost the ability to regain either. An "exhibition tour" started and stopped with just one bout.

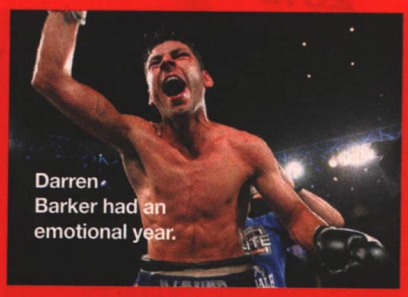
He was still deep in debt and seemed set on a path toward a sad conclusion. That was all the way back in 2006.

The years had not been good for him, and retirement wouldn't be better. His fortune had been squandered. His "Iron" body had become bloated. There were run-ins with the law, and there were the struggles with drugs and alcohol. And, tragically, there was the accidental death of his young daughter.

It's been a long road back for Mike Tyson, who slimmed down with a vegan diet, continues to work on staying clean and sober, and relies on his wife as a foundation for his hopes of stability.

His story could've — and perhaps should've — ended badly. That's what we expected, but that's never what we hope for. We want criminals to rehabilitate themselves. We honor the way that Bernard Hopkins exited prison, beat the odds and embarked on a Hall of Fame career.

We cannot condone Tyson's past, but we can root for him as he seeks to find peace, and as he works toward a more peaceful present and future, for himself and for his children.



Darren Barker had an emotional year.

DARREN BARKER

Barker's younger brother died in a 2006 automobile crash. He also had recurring hip problems that troubled him. After a 2011 loss to Sergio Martinez, Barker came off the canvas to edge Daniel Geale for a world title. Alas, his hip dislocated in a December loss to Felix Sturm.

VITALI KLITSCHKO

Klitschko has put his fighting spirit (and celebrity) to good use in Ukraine, where his front-and-center role in anti-government protests has turned into a run for president. A courageous undertaking considering the previous opposition leader sits in prison on dubious charges.

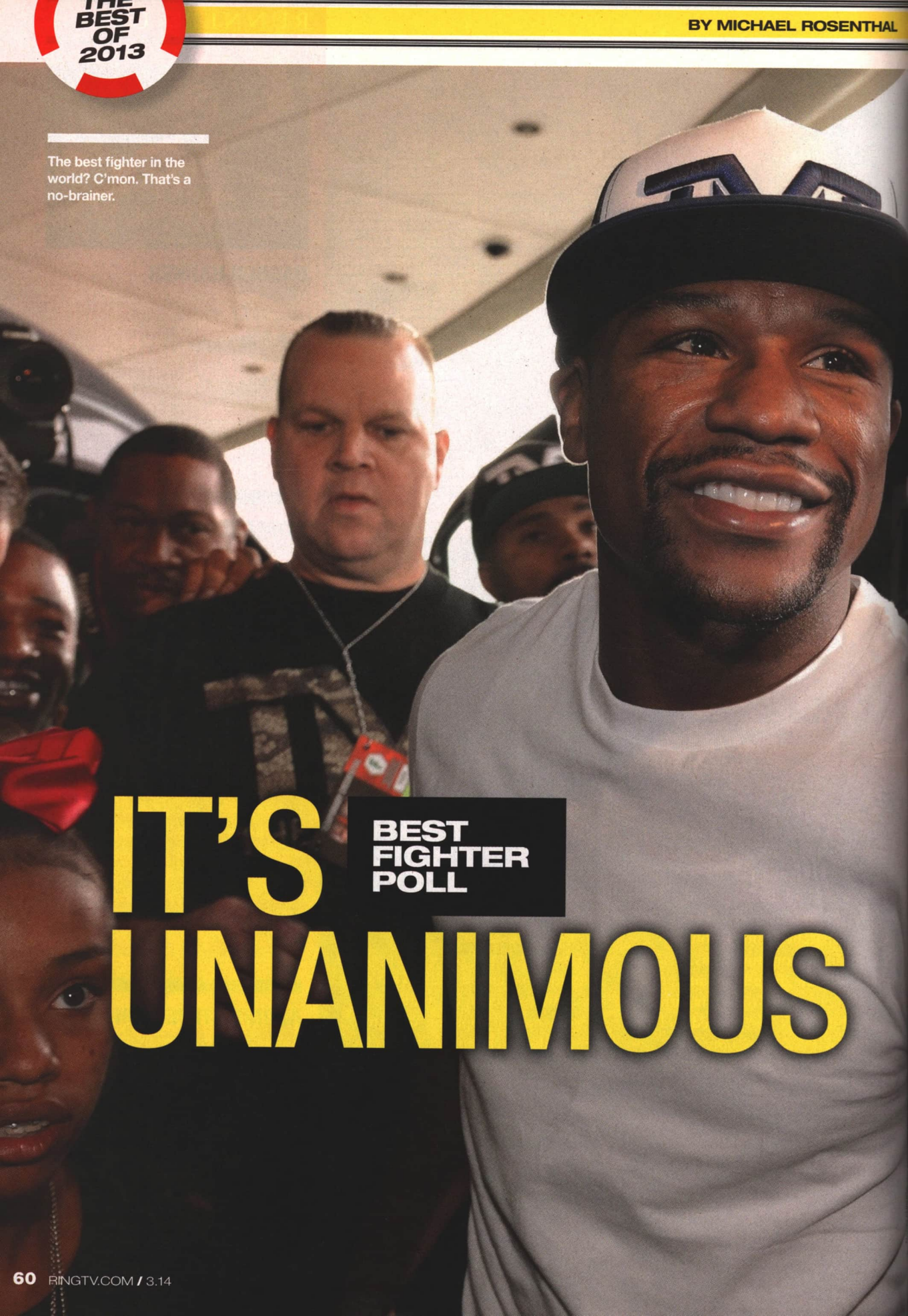
DEONTAY WILDER

Wilder hadn't planned on boxing. But when his daughter was born with spina bifida, he dropped out of college, took jobs and soon turned to fighting. He was raw when he won bronze in the 2008 Olympics, and as a pro he's an undefeated but still untested heavyweight knockout artist.

ADONIS STEVENSON

Stevenson also has a criminal history, but he has found salvation in boxing. This year, Stevenson — one of the last products of late trainer Emanuel Steward — captured the RING light heavyweight championship at age 35 and then defended it twice, improving under the tutelage of Steward's nephew, Javon "Sugar" Hill.

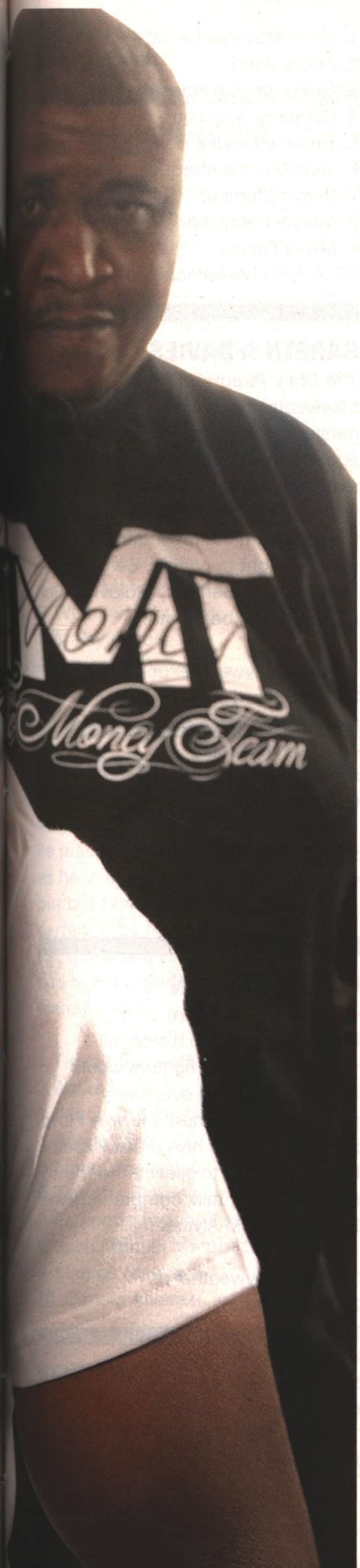
BY MICHAEL ROSENTHAL



The best fighter in the world? C'mon. That's a no-brainer.

IT'S UNANIMOUS

BEST FIGHTER POLL



It's nearly impossible to get boxing experts or anyone else who follows the sport to agree on anything. The most common exception? The fact that Floyd Mayweather Jr. is the best fighter in the world.

Thus, it's no surprise that Mayweather is the unanimous winner of THE RING's annual Best Fighter Poll for 2013, meaning he received first-place votes from all 10 of the experts – representing five countries – who took part.

Mayweather also swept the first-place votes in 2007, making him and Manny Pacquiao (2008 and 2010) the only fighters to win the poll unanimously more than once since the poll was instituted in 1980.

"Money" has won the last three polls and six overall, equaling the record set by Roy Jones Jr., who won six times between 1995 and 2003. Marvin Hagler is next on the list with four victories, which came consecutively from 1983 to 1986. Pacquiao (2008-10) and Julio Cesar Chavez (1990-92) are three-time winners.

Andre Ward finished as runner-up for the second year in a row with 117 points, eight more than last year. The RING super middleweight champ was No. 2 on nine of the 10 lists and No. 3 on the 10th.

Ward was followed by No. 3 Timothy Bradley with 62 points and Juan Manuel Marquez and Pacquiao, who tied at No. 4 with 53 points. Pacquiao moved up two places from last year.

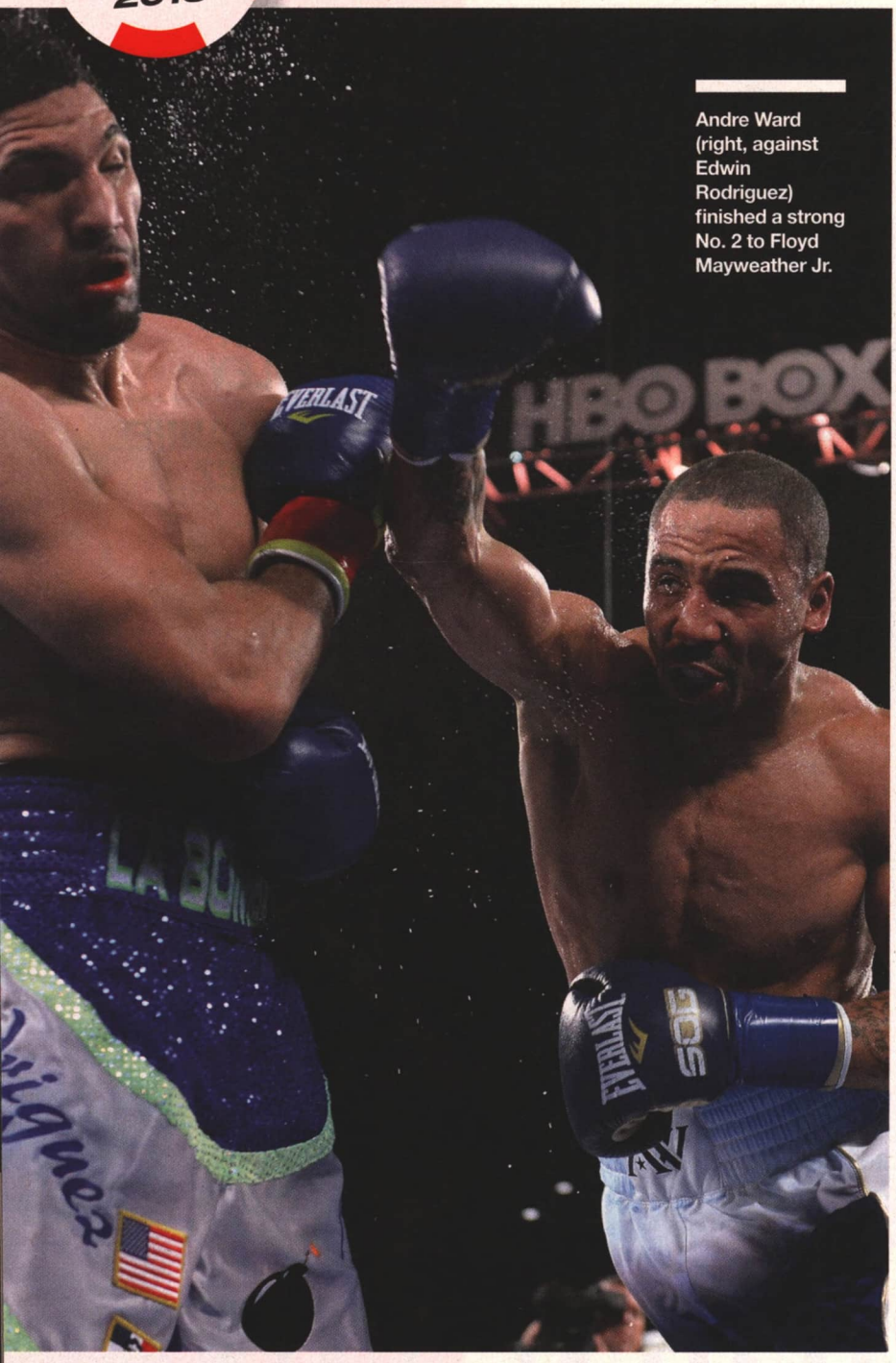
Three fighters who were in the Top 10 last year dropped out: Nonito Donaire, Vitali Klitschko and Carl Froch. Four fighters also made the Top 10 for the first time: Guillermo Rigondeaux (No. 8), Gennady Golovkin (No. 9), and Danny Garcia and Mikey Garcia (tied for No. 10).

In the poll, the fighters received points for each vote they got: 15 points for a first-place vote, 12 for second, nine for third, seven for fourth, six for fifth, five for sixth, four for seventh, three for eighth, two for ninth and one for 10th. •

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.** 150
2. **ANDRE WARD** 117
3. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY** 62
4T. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** 53
4T. **MANNY PACQUIAO** 53
6. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** 48
7. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** 47
8. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX** 45
9. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN** 28
10T. **DANNY GARCIA** 9
10T. **MIKEY GARCIA** 9

OTHERS RECEIVING VOTES

CARL FROCH 6, BERNARD HOPKINS 6, CANELO ALVAREZ 2, ROMAN GONZALEZ 2, MARCOS MAIDANA 2 AND ADONIS STEVENSON 1.



Andre Ward (right, against Edwin Rodriguez) finished a strong No. 2 to Floyd Mayweather Jr.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Andre Ward
3. Guillermo Rigondeaux
4. Gennady Golovkin
5. Timothy Bradley
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Sergio Martinez
8. Manny Pacquiao
9. Mikey Garcia
10. Adonis Stevenson

BEST FIGHTER POLL

RON BORGES

Boston Herald

No one has come close to beating Mayweather in years because he is a nearly perfect blend of offense and defense. No one fighting today can match his speed, ring knowledge and defensive ability, and he hits harder than people think. Just ask Canelo Alvarez.

GARETH A DAVIES

The Daily Telegraph (U.K.)

Mayweather is a supreme defensive master and has become better with age. Peerless at present, he could reach the 50-fight mark undefeated, which is why he will probably avoid the calls from the most dangerous middleweight punchers, Sergio Martinez and Gennady Golovkin. For me, he would beat both.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Andre Ward
3. Gennady Golovkin
4. Timothy Bradley
5. Sergio Martinez
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Manny Pacquiao
8. Wladimir Klitschko
9. Guillermo Rigondeaux
10. Saul Alvarez

COREY ERDMAN

RingTV.com (Canada)

Debate his place in history all you want, but few fighters would be heavily favored over every prospective opponent the way Floyd is at this stage of his career. It took him 36 minutes to silence the "he's slowing down" talk, comprehensively beating Canelo Alvarez.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Andre Ward
3. Timothy Bradley
4. Wladimir Klitschko
5. Sergio Martinez
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Manny Pacquiao
8. Guillermo Rigondeaux

9. Danny Garcia
10. Carl Froch

NORM FRAUENHEIM

THE RING Magazine

Robert Guerrero and Canelo Alvarez had no hope against Mayweather, who convinced fans more than judges that any ranking without him at No.1 is foolish or fraudulent. Twenty-four rounds of dominance are an uninterrupted argument on behalf of Mayweather's unchallenged reign.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Andre Ward
3. Manny Pacquiao
4. Sergio Martinez
5. Timothy Bradley
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Wladimir Klitschko
8. Mikey Garcia
9. Gennady Golovkin
10. Danny Garcia

NICK GIONGCO

Manila Bulletin (Philippines)

Mayweather is tops simply because he just keeps on winning. As long as he wins, there's no other option but put him on top. But it would be perfect if he fights Pacquiao next. Pacquiao is a worthy challenger and is the most logical fight out there for him.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Andre Ward
3. Wladimir Klitschko
4. Sergio Martinez
5. Manny Pacquiao
6. Timothy Bradley
7. Guillermo Rigondeaux
8. Juan Manuel Marquez
9. Marcos Maidana
10. Canelo Alvarez

KEVIN IOLE

Yahoo! Sports

Mayweather has faced elite competition, including a number of current or future Hall of Famers, and he wins going away each time. He combines offense and defense better than anyone in the game, and no fighter is smarter at making adjustments.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Guillermo Rigondeaux
3. Andre Ward
4. Tim Bradley
5. Juan Manuel Marquez
6. Manny Pacquiao
7. Gennady Golovkin
8. Mikey Garcia
9. Wladimir Klitschko
10. Roman Gonzalez

GUNNAR MEINHARDT

Die Welt (Germany)

For a fighter often wrongly accused of avoiding challenges, the cash and fistic king has defeated three men – Alvarez, Cotto, and Mosley – who were rated by many as their divisions' leaders going in. No one can defeat him currently.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Andre Ward
3. Wladimir Klitschko
4. Timothy Bradley
5. Manny Pacquiao
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Gennady Golovkin
8. Guillermo Rigondeaux
9. Carl Froch
10. Danny Garcia

ERIKA MONTOYA

Milenio Diario (Mexico)

Floyd is the constant of this ranking, leaving no place for others to challenge him. Almost 37, he can soon let go of sports challenges and focus on his business. He earned it.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Andre Ward
3. Juan Manuel Marquez
4. Sergio Martinez
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Manny Pacquiao
7. Wladimir Klitschko
8. Guillermo Rigondeaux
9. Timothy Bradley
10. Roman Gonzalez

DAN RAFAEL

ESPN.com

Mayweather and Pacquiao were 1 and 1A (in whichever order) for ages, but it's been clear for at least the last year that Mayweather has separated himself from Manny and everyone else. He's been more active, beaten quality opponents and looks just as sharp and fast as ever.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Andre Ward
3. Wladimir Klitschko
4. Manny Pacquiao
5. Timothy Bradley Jr.
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Sergio Martinez
8. Danny Garcia
9. Gennady Golovkin
10. Mikey Garcia

RICK REENO

BoxingScene.com

Mayweather has consistently dominated his competition for the better part of his 45-0 run. At age 36, he is now fighting and overwhelming a younger generation of up-and-comers, with little to no noticeable weaknesses in his wins.

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
2. Andre Ward
3. Guillermo Rigondeaux
4. Timothy Bradley
5. Sergio Martinez
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Manny Pacquiao
8. Carl Froch
9. Danny Garcia
10. Wladimir Klitschko

PAST POLLS

2012 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 136 (7)
2. Andre Ward – 109 (1)
3. Juan Manuel Marquez – 82
4. Sergio Martinez – 76
5. Nonito Donaire – 53
6. Manny Pacquiao – 48
7. Wladimir Klitschko – 33
8. Vitali Klitschko – 18

9T. Timothy Bradley – 14
9T. Carl Froch – 14

2011 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 136.5 (6)
2. Manny Pacquiao – 127.5 (4)
3. Sergio Martinez – 80
4. Andre Ward – 65
5. Juan Manuel Marquez – 57
6. Nonito Donaire – 53
7. Wladimir Klitschko – 33

8T. Timothy Bradley – 19
8T. Pongsaklek Wonjongkam – 19
10. Lucian Bute – 11

2010 POLL

1. Manny Pacquiao – 150
2. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 117
3. Juan Manuel Marquez – 76
4. Sergio Martinez – 68
5. Andre Ward – 48
6. Nonito Donaire – 41
7. Tim Bradley – 27
8. Bernard Hopkins – 24
9. Juan Manuel Lopez – 21
10. Wladimir Klitschko – 20

2009 POLL

1. Manny Pacquiao – 144
2. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 126
3. Shane Mosley – 79
4. Bernard Hopkins – 61
5. Chad Dawson – 48
6. Paul Williams – 42
7. Juan Manuel Marquez – 40
8. Nonito Donaire – 22
9. Ivan Calderon – 15
10. Arthur Abraham – 14

2008 POLL

1. Manny Pacquiao – 150
2. Joe Calzaghe – 101
3. Juan Manuel Marquez – 99
4. Bernard Hopkins – 73
5. Antonio Margarito – 52
6. Israel Vazquez – 50
7. Rafael Marquez –31
8. Miguel Cotto – 28

9T. Ricky Hatton – 18
9T. Paul Williams – 18

2007 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 150
2. Manny Pacquiao – 103
3. Joe Calzaghe – 83
4. Bernard Hopkins – 63
5. Juan Manuel Marquez – 58
6. Miguel Cotto – 51
7. Israel Vazquez – 30
8. Kelly Pavlik – 21
9. Winky Wright – 15

10T. Juan Diaz – 13
10T. Oscar De La Hoya – 13

2006 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 141
2. Manny Pacquiao – 129
3. Winky Wright – 84
4. Jermaine Taylor – 61
5. Joe Calzaghe – 49
6. Rafael Marquez – 28
7. Ricky Hatton – 23
8. Shane Mosley – 20
9. Jose Luis Castillo – 19
10. Bernard Hopkins – 16

2005 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 144
2. Winky Wright – 113
3. Marco Antonio Barrera – 70
4. Juan Manuel Marquez – 43
5. Rafael Marquez – 39
6. Ricky Hatton – 38
7. Jose Luis Castillo – 36
8. Jermain Taylor – 34
9. Zab Judah – 31
10. Antonio Tarver – 30

2004 POLL

1. Bernard Hopkins – 150
2. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 111
3. Kostya Tszyu – 88
4. Winky Wright – 70
5. Marco Antonio Barrera – 52
6. Manny Pacquiao – 38
7. Erik Morales – 26
8. Juan Manuel Marquez – 25
9. Felix Trinidad – 22

10T. Diego Corrales – 11
10T. Rafael Marquez –11

2003 POLL

1. Roy Jones – 142
2. Bernard Hopkins – 114
3. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 97
4. Shane Mosley – 53
5. Kostya Tszyu – 48
6. Oscar De La Hoya – 45
7. Manny Pacquiao – 38
8. James Toney – 35
9. Erik Morales – 31
10. Lennox Lewis – 22

2002 POLL

1. Roy Jones – 135
2. Oscar De La Hoya – 89

3T. Marco Antonio Barrera – 78
3T. Vernon Forrest – 78
3T. Bernard Hopkins – 78
6. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 45
7. Lennox Lewis – 43
8. Kostya Tszyu – 42
9. Erik Morales – 25
10. Shane Mosley – 13

2001 POLL

1. Shane Mosley – 132
2. Roy Jones – 108
3. Bernard Hopkins – 98
4. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 77
5. Marco Antonio Barrera – 44
6. Oscar De La Hoya – 40
7. Felix Trinidad – 39
8. Kostya Tszyu – 34
9. Lennox Lewis – 23
10. Ricardo Lopez – 22

2000 POLL

1. Felix Trinidad – 126
2. Shane Mosley – 123
3. Roy Jones – 109
4. Oscar De La Hoya – 43
5. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 39
6. Naseem Hamed – 37
7. Ricardo Lopez – 35
8. Diego Corrales – 33
9. Bernard Hopkins – 32
10. Lennox Lewis – 31

1999 POLL

1. Roy Jones – 150
2. Oscar De La Hoya – 85
3. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 78

4T. Shane Mosley – 68
4T. Felix Trinidad – 68

6T. Mark Johnson – 47
6T. Ricardo Lopez – 47

8. Erik Morales – 21
9. Bernard Hopkins – 16
10. Fernando Vargas – 15

1998 POLL

1. Roy Jones – 141
2. Oscar De La Hoya – 123
3. Felix Trinidad – 67
4. Shane Mosley – 65
5. Evander Holyfield – 55
6. Mark Johnson – 45
7. Naseem Hamed – 33
8. Ricardo Lopez – 23
9. Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 19
10. Pernell Whitaker – 14

1997 POLL

1. Oscar De La Hoya – 123
2. Roy Jones – 117
3. Ricardo Lopez – 83
4. Evander Holyfield – 80
5. Felix Trinidad – 65
6. Pernell Whitaker – 37
7. Naseem Hamed – 28

8T. Mark Johnson – 22
8T. Junior Jones – 22
10. Johnny Tapia – 18

1996 POLL

1. Roy Jones – 123
2. Oscar De La Hoya – 107
3. Pernell Whitaker – 92
4. Evander Holyfield – 64
5. Felix Trinidad – 59
6. Ricardo Lopez – 56
7. Terry Norris – 28
8. Ike Quartey – 21
9. Azumah Nelson – 12
10. Yuri Arbachakov – 11

1995 POLL

1. Roy Jones – 138
2. Pernell Whitaker – 126
3. Oscar De La Hoya – 74
4. Felix Trinidad – 59
5. Marco Antonio Barrera – 48
6. Riddick Bowe – 44
7. Ricardo Lopez – 37
8. Julio Cesar Chavez – 18
9. Ike Quartey – 16
10. Naseem Hamed – 12

1994 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker – 130
2. Roy Jones – 129
3. Frankie Randall – 53
4. Ricardo Lopez – 45
5. Orlando Canizales – 39
6. Chiquita Gonzalez – 38
7. James Toney – 36
8. Gerald McClellan – 33
9. Felix Trinidad –29
10. Kevin Kelley – 28

1993 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker – 147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez – 86
3. Terry Norris – 84
4. James Toney – 76
5. Michael Carbajal – 39
6. Evander Holyfield – 36
7. Buddy McGirt – 28
8. Roy Jones – 23
9. Orlando Canizales – 22
10. Ricardo Lopez – 21

1992 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez – 136
2. Terry Norris – 91
3. Pernell Whitaker – 85
4. Buddy McGirt – 60
5. Riddick Bowe – 45
6. Orlando Canizales – 36
7. Azumah Nelson –34
8. Lennox Lewis – 24
9. Julian Jackson – 18

10T. Roy Jones – 15
10T. Mike McCallum – 15

1991 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez – 138
2. Pernell Whitaker – 100
3. Evander Holyfield – 78
4. Mike Tyson – 55
5. Meldrick Taylor – 48
6. Mike McCallum – 38
7. Thomas Hearns – 34
8. Khaosai Galaxy – 25
9. Terry Norris – 22
10. Simon Brown – 21

1990 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez – 123
2. Pernell Whitaker – 104
3. Mike Tyson – 71
4. Meldrick Taylor – 57
5. Buster Douglas – 51
6. Simon Brown – 27
7. Antonio Esparragoza – 25
8. Michael Nunn – 23
9. Evander Holyfield – 21
10. Humberto Gonzalez – 14

1989 POLL

1. Mike Tyson – 147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez – 91
3. Meldrick Taylor – 61
4. Michael Nunn – 60
5. Evander Holyfield – 56
6. Pernell Whitaker – 46
7. Ray Leonard – 28
8. Jeff Fenech – 27
9. Azumah Nelson – 18
10. Marlon Starling – 16

1988 POLL

1. Mike Tyson – 144
2. Julio Cesar Chavez – 118
3. Evander Holyfield – 66
4. Ray Leonard – 55
5. Jeff Fenech – 44
6. Michael Nunn – 33
7. Azumah Nelson – 32
8. Jung-Koo Chang – 23
9. Buddy McGirt – 21
10. Sumbu Kalambay – 18

NO POLL IN 1987

1986 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler – 138
2. Mike Tyson – 92
3. Donald Curry – 59
4. Thomas Hearns – 52
5. Edwin Rosario – 47

6T. Azumah Nelson – 45
6T. Michael Spinks – 45

8. Evander Holyfield – 32
9. Julio Cesar Chavez – 26
10. Hector Camacho – 22

1985 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler – 150
2. Hector Camacho – 86
3. Michael Spinks – 85
4. Donald Curry – 78
5. Thomas Hearns – 42
6. Barry McGuigan – 32
7. Milton McCrory – 25

8T. Julio Cesar Chavez – 22
8T. Pinklon Thomas – 22
10. Larry Holmes – 21

1984 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler – 112
2. Aaron Pryor – 77
3. Larry Holmes –72
4. Eusebio Pedroza – 66
5. Hector Camacho – 50

6T. Jeff Chandler – 47
6T. Ray Leonard – 47

8. Michael Spinks – 45
9. Thomas Hearns – 34
10. Donald Curry – 26

1983 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler – 147
2. Aaron Pryor – 93
3. Larry Holmes – 91
4. Michael Spinks – 66
5. Jeff Chandler – 57
6. Thomas Hearns – 45
7. Alexis Arguello – 29
8. Wilfredo Gomez – 28
9. Hector Camacho – 24
10. Eusebio Pedroza – 12

1982 POLL

1. Ray Leonard – 147
2. Alexis Arguello – 97
3. Marvin Hagler – 76
4. Salvador Sanchez – 72
5. Wilfred Benitez – 68
6. Larry Holmes – 61
7. Jeff Chandler – 25
8. Eusebio Pedroza – 18
9. Aaron Pryor – 17

10T. Thomas Hearns – 14
10T. Dwight Muhammad Qawi – 14

1981 POLL

1. Thomas Hearns – 116
2. Ray Leonard – 108
3. Marvin Hagler –76
4. Larry Holmes – 75
5. Alexis Arguello – 62
6. Wilfredo Gomez – 58
7. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad –28
8. Matthew Saad Muhammad – 24
9. Wilfred Benitez – 18

10T. Roberto Duran – 13
10T. Aaron Pryor – 13

1980 POLL

1. Roberto Duran – 96
2. Ray Leonard – 93
3. Wilfredo Gomez – 88
4. Danny Lopez – 65
5. Pipino Cuevas – 54
6. Alexis Arguello – 40
7. Larry Holmes – 32
8. Wilfred Benitez – 26

9T. Vito Antuofermo – 25
9T. Matthew Saad Muhammad – 25

BY DAVID GREISMAN

HIGHLY UNOFFICIAL AWARDS

BEST TAUNT
Sergey Kovalev's pelvic thrust against Nathan Cleverly

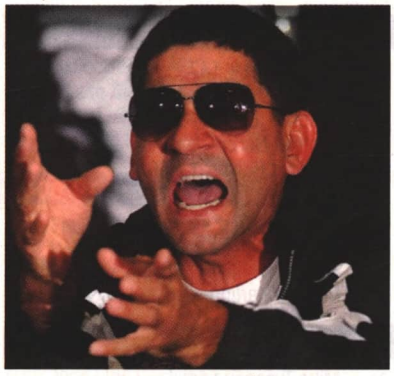
NAME OF THE YEAR
Petchsamuthr Duanaaymukdahan, aka "Mookie"

"ROCK 'EM, SOCK 'EM ROBOTS" AWARD
Timothy Bradley and Ruslan Provodnikov

MILEY CYRUS "DESPERATE ATTENTION SEEKER" AWARD
Adrien Broner

MINI-MARGARITO (IN A GOOD WAY) AWARD
Leo Santa Cruz

ERIK MORALES "SADLY PAST HIS PRIME WARRIOR" AWARD
Rafael Marquez, who retired after losing to Efrain Esquivias



DINA LOHAN "SPOTLIGHT-STEALING PARENT" AWARD
Angel Garcia

FIGHTER TO PULL OUT OF THE MOST BOUTS
TBA

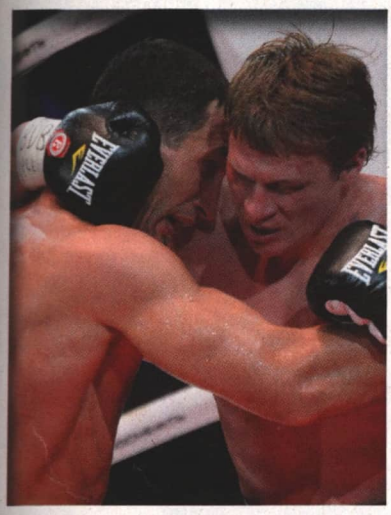
HATFIELDS AND McCOYS "NEVER-ENDING BATTLE" AWARD
Top Rank and Golden Boy

JERRY SPRINGER'S NEXT GUESTS
Adrien Broner, Paulie Malignaggi and Malignaggi's "side piece"

YOEL JUDAH VS. ROGER MAYWEATHER "TRAINER FIGHT" AWARD
Freddie Roach and Alex Ariza

ROCKY BALBOA "CARTOONISH PUNISHMENT ABSORBER" AWARD
Nihito Arakawa

"ALWAYS THE BRIDESMAID, NEVER THE BRIDE" AWARD
Gabriel Rosado



JOHN RUIZ "HUGGER OF THE YEAR" AWARD

Wladimir Klitschko

DIEGO CORRALES "DRAMATIC KO SUMMONER" AWARD

John Molina, against Mickey Bey

HUMPTY DUMPTY "INEVITABLE SHATTERING" AWARD

Seth Mitchell

ROSS AND RACHEL "ON AND OFF RELATIONSHIP" AWARD

James Kirkland and trainer Ann Wolfe, once again working together

STEVIE WONDER AWARD

Boxing judge C.J. Ross

JAMES KIRKLAND "INOPPORTUNE FIREARMS ARREST" AWARD

Robert Guerrero, cuffed before his bout with Floyd Mayweather Jr.

JAMES TONEY "OLD, OVERWEIGHT AND FAILING IN MMA" AWARD

Riddick Bowe, 45 years old, 300 pounds, and picked apart in a Muay Thai kickboxing bout

"CAN I GET A REFUND?" AWARD

Boris Hryunov, who bid more than $23 million to promote Wladimir Klitschko vs. Alexander Povetkin

AFLAC! "DUCK OF THE YEAR" AWARD

The middleweight division, which steered clear of Gennady Golovkin

"DING-DONG, THE WITCH IS DEAD" AWARD

Paul Spadafora's prolonged comeback finally brought a loss, and Chris John's extended title reign came to an end

THE FERNANDO VARGAS "MOST DISFIGURED FACE" AWARD

Denis Lebedev, after his fight with Guillermo Jones

THE "NOT WASTING TIME LIKE GARY RUSSELL JR." AWARD

Vasyl Lomachenko

"OSTRICH BURYING ITS HEAD IN SAND" AWARD

Boxing's handling of fighter safety and performance enhancing drugs

"SLAP ON THE WRIST" AWARD

Nevada suspended Mickey Bey for just three months and fined him $1,000 for his astronomical 30:1 testosterone ratio

GAMBOA-LOPEZ "LOST ITS LUSTER" AWARD

Nonito Donaire (outpointed by Guillermo Rigondeaux) vs. Abner Mares (knocked out in one round by Jhonny Gonzalez)

"NOT QUITE THE GEORGE FOREMAN GRILL" AWARD

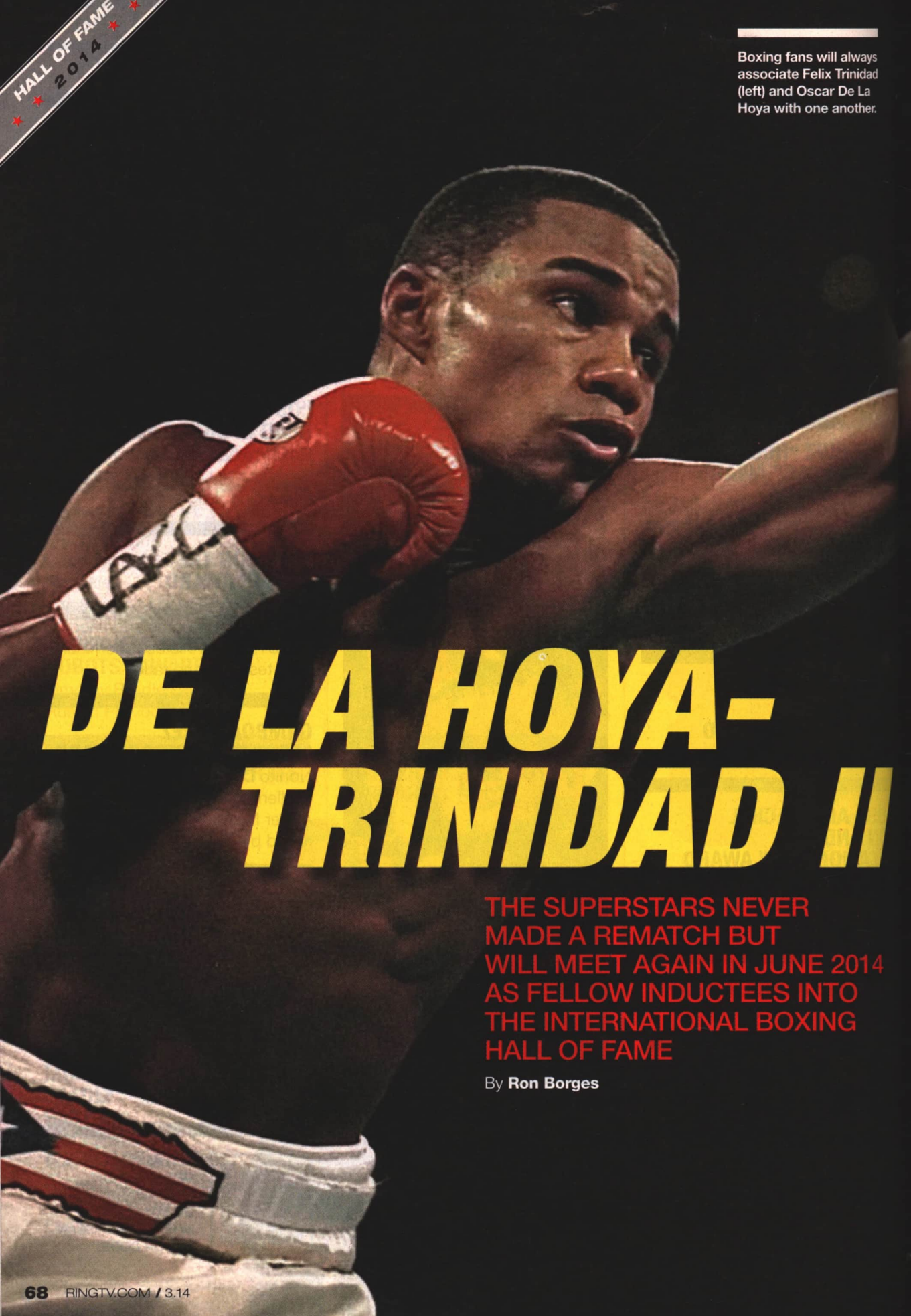
Evander Holyfield's "Real Deal BBQ Sauce" and Victor Ortiz's "Face Lube" skin care products

WINNER OF THE HUNGER GAMES

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.

FOR PAST WINNERS OF THE ANNUAL RING AWARDS, GO TO http://bit.ly/1jmRZS2 OR SCAN THE QR CODE.

HALL OF FAME 2014



Boxing fans will always associate Felix Trinidad (left) and Oscar De La Hoya with one another.

DE LA HOYA-TRINIDAD II

THE SUPERSTARS NEVER MADE A REMATCH BUT WILL MEET AGAIN IN JUNE 2014 AS FELLOW INDUCTEES INTO THE INTERNATIONAL BOXING HALL OF FAME

By **Ron Borges**

They should have crossed paths several more times after Sept. 18, 1999, but because the business of boxing is so often an unmade bed, that won't happen again until June 8, 2014, when Oscar De La Hoya and Felix Trinidad finally square off a second time as they walk together into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. Oh what might have been were boxing politics not more fractured than American politics.

For much of their careers De La Hoya and Trinidad were the biggest names in the sport, yet they faced each other only once in a fight that cried out not merely for a rematch but for a trilogy – and then some. It was a fight that changed the economics of boxing, loosening the stranglehold on the purse strings long held by the heavyweight division by setting what was then a pay-per-view record for a non-heavyweight fight. It also opened up a vast new audience for lighter-weight fighters because of the crossover popularity of the Golden Boy from East L.A. and the thunderous power of Trinidad, who may well be the most popular fighter in the history of Puerto Rico's long love affair with prize fighting.

"They represented a change in the sport in the mid-1990s," said broadcaster Larry Merchant. "Latinos were becoming an important factor at the box office. The passion of Mexican and Mexican-Americans for boxing was growing, and Puerto Ricans had a long love affair with the sport. That was all galvanized by these two exceptional fighters and personalities. They transcended their fan base."

It was a night that cried out for an encore that never came, a night when De La Hoya boxed well enough to win easily yet was

De La Hoya (left) outboxed Trinidad for most of their fight but paid a price when he took his foot off the gas.

denied victory in part because he took for granted that his lead was so solid he could retreat for the final 12 minutes and still have his hand raised.

That he did not defies justification because De La Hoya barely lost a minute of the first eight rounds (nor won more than a minute of the final four, to be fair), moving with precise footwork that frustrated Trinidad while landing stinging counter punches and sharp combinations that left his opponent following him from one end of the ring to the other to no good end.

Early in the ninth round De La Hoya blistered Trinidad with a furious seven-punch combination that seemed a signature statement of final dominance, but from that moment on he took too literally the advice of trainers Gil Clancy and Robert Alcazar to "Box! Box!" Content to avoid further confrontation, a tiring De La Hoya lost the final four rounds on the judges' cards and the fight by a stunning majority decision even though he landed more than 100 more punches than Trinidad and was never hurt.

"I thought De La Hoya won the fight," Merchant said. "He clearly outboxed him the first half of the fight. He laid the blueprint for how to fight Trinidad that others took advantage of later. In [Rounds] 7, 8, 9 Trinidad tried to step it up. I always wondered if Trinidad landed a punch that changed the fight or if Oscar so fell in love with disciplined boxing he forgot to keep fighting. [Co-trainer] Gil Clancy told me later he regretted not telling Oscar to go out and win the last round. He told me he felt responsible."

When it was over, Trinidad's promoter, Don King, stole a microphone from De La Hoya's promoter, Bob Arum, and bellowed at the post-fight press conference "The lights are out in Arumville!" The microphone plug was quickly pulled by one of Arum's publicists, and the King of bombast was silenced, sort of.

To King's surprise, the lights remain bright in Arumville to this day and are even brighter in the offices of Golden Boy Promotions, the company De La Hoya formed in 2002 initially to promote his own fights and later to grow into the most powerful promotional company in the sport. Yet King, Arum or De La Hoya weren't able to negotiate a second fight with Trinidad even though the decision was and remains hotly disputed.

In a sense the largest wonder of "The Fight of the Millennium" was that it was never revived in the New Millennium despite the flabbergasting nature of the pay-per-view sales that night. The 1.4 million pay-per-view buys were later eclipsed by De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather Jr., who in 2007 set the all-time record, heavyweight fights included, of 2.55 million buys (give or take 100,000 depending on what source you care to believe). Mayweather-De La Hoya seemed the final affirmation of what De

La Hoya-Trinidad accomplished eight years earlier at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas.

That fact was recently reinforced by the Mayweather-Canelo Alvarez fight, which broke the all-time pay-per-view revenue record although not the individual sales mark. Ironically, the fight was promoted by De La Hoya.

A second fight with Trinidad would have surely been bigger than the first because both men continued to grow in popularity just as the pay-per-view universe continued to swell. In the end, De La Hoya would defeat 17 world champions, win 10 world titles in six weight classes and put up the highest grossing pay-per-view totals in boxing history ($696 million in pay-per-view revenue alone) while Trinidad would have the longest reign of any welterweight champion (six years, eight months, 14 days) and make the second-most successful defenses of his 147-pound title (15) before going on to win junior middleweight and middleweight titles.

"I suppose the same factors that made it so difficult to make the first fight is why there was no second fight: money, King, Arum," Merchant said. "Both went on to have other big fights but in hindsight the most natural thing in the world was a rematch with those pay-per-view numbers. It was a big event with a lot of visceral feelings on both sides."

We will never know what might have happened had they faced each other a time or two more, but what we do know is that De La Hoya became not only a world champion in six weight classes but a fistic phenomenon that attracted females and a growing Latino market to boxing. He brought in fans that had previously paid the sport no heed, and he did it not simply by smiling and looking good. He did it by fighting the best opponents of his time and beating most of them whether he got the decision or not.

De La Hoya (39-6, 30 KOs) first captivated the nation when he won an Olympic gold medal in Barcelona in 1992 and then took it back to the gravesite of his mother in East L.A. to fulfill a promise he'd made to her long ago. Combine his story with his Latin-lover looks, a promoter like Arum behind him and ferocious punching power when he was in the lighter weight classes at 130, 135 and even 140, and you had the formula for the creation of the Beatlemania-like fanaticism that followed him throughout his career.

Traveling with De La Hoya, especially into any heavily Hispanic area, was like walking with John, Paul, George and Ringo. It was insane, but it was an insanity he embraced. He knew how to please a crowd inside the ring and out, and the result was he became the most wildly popular boxer of his time and maybe of all time. Oddly though, that and his well-documented problems with addiction and women seemed

HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2014

MODERN

Last bout no earlier than 1943

JOE CALZAGHE

ACTIVE: 1993-2008
RECORD: 46-0 (32 KOs)
BACKGROUND: "The Pride of Wales" was one of the few boxers to finish his career with a perfect record. Calzaghe, trained by his father, Enzo, outpointed Chris Eubank in 1997 to win the vacant WBO super middleweight title and successfully defended it a division record 21 times over the next decade. He would add the IBF, WBC, WBA and RING titles to his collection – making him the undisputed champ – before moving up to light heavyweight and beating Bernard Hopkins and Roy Jones Jr. in the U.S.

OSCAR DE LA HOYA

ACTIVE: 1992-2008
RECORD: 39-6 (30 KOs)
BACKGROUND: "The Golden Boy" drove the sport for about a decade with his charisma, good looks and all-around ability. He won 11 world titles (including a RING belt) in six divisions, junior lightweight to middleweight. In the process he beat a long list of champions, including Rafael Ruelas, Genaro Hernandez, Ike Quartey, Fernando Vargas and Julio Cesar Chavez. His fight against Floyd Mayweather Jr. in 2007, which he lost by a split decision, generated a record 2.55 million pay-per-view buys. He is now a successful promoter.

FELIX TRINIDAD

ACTIVE: 1990-2008
RECORD: 42-3 (35 KOs)
BACKGROUND: "Tito" was known for his crushing punching power, particularly his left hook, which made him tremendously popular in his native Puerto Rico and beyond. He stopped Maurice Blocker in two rounds to win the IBF welterweight title and made 15 successful defenses, 12 by knockout. In total, he won five world titles in three weight divisions. Among his victims: Hector Camacho, Pernell Whitaker, Oscar De La Hoya, Fernando Vargas and Ricardo Mayorga. He was trained by his father, Felix Sr.

OLD-TIMER

Last bout must fall between 1893 and 1942

GEORGE CHANEY

ACTIVE: 1910-26
RECORD: 101-21-3 (78 KOs)
BACKGROUND: "KO" Chaney is considered one of the hardest punchers of all time even at only 5 feet 1 inch. He reportedly was given his nickname by Charlie Chaplin, who was impressed with the fighter's power. Hall of Famer Kid Williams was among his many KO victims. Chaney never won a world title, failing against featherweight champ Johnny Kilbane in 1911 and junior lightweight Johnny Dundee in 1921, but left the sport with a fearsome reputation.

CHARLES LEDOUX

ACTIVE: 1909-26
RECORD: 97-22-5 (81 KOs)
BACKGROUND: The little Frenchman, who was only 5 feet ½ inch, found success both in his native country and in the United States. He held his own with a who's who of the best bantamweights of his day, including fellow Hall of Famers Johnny Coulon, Eugene Criqui, Jim Driscoll, Joe Lynch, Kid Williams and Pete Herman. He won French and European titles but was never universally recognized as a world champ.

MIKE O'DOWD

ACTIVE: 1913-23
RECORD: 51-7-3 (39 KOs)
BACKGROUND: O'Dowd fought on even terms with some of the best fighters who ever lived, including legends Jack Britton, Ted "Kid" Lewis, Harry Greb and Mike Gibbons. The product of Minneapolis won the world middleweight title by stopping tough Al McCoy in six rounds in 1917. He lost the belt to Johnny Wilson in 1920 but, two years later, claimed New York's version of the title by defeating Dave Rosenberg on a foul. O'Dowd fought once more and then retired.

PIONEER

Last pro bout in or before 1892

TOM ALLEN

ACTIVE: 1861-84
RECORD: 12-8-4 (1 KO)
BACKGROUND: Allen, a native of England, claimed what was billed as the Heavyweight Championship of America by beating Bill Davis in 1869 in St. Louis.

NON-PARTICIPANT

EUGENE CORRI

POSITION: Referee
BACKGROUND: Corri was a top British referee early in the 20th century. He reportedly worked more than 1,000 fights in his career. He retired in 1931.

BARRY HEARN

POSITION: Promoter
BACKGROUND: Hearn, head of the promotional company Matchroom Sports, became a boxing promoter in 1987 and has put together hundreds of shows for television.

RICHARD STEELE

POSITION: Referee
BACKGROUND: Steele is one of the most recognizable referees ever, working such fights as Pryor-Arguello II, Hagler-Hearns, Leonard-Hagler and Chavez-Taylor. He reffed 167 title bouts.

OBSERVER

GRAHAM HOUSTON

POSITION: Journalist
BACKGROUND: Houston has been covering boxing since 1963, working in his native England before relocating to Canada. He also is an author.

NEIL LEIFER

POSITION: Photographer
BACKGROUND: Leifer took one of the most iconic photos in boxing history, the one in which Muhammad Ali is standing over a prone Sonny Liston in their 1965 rematch.

to unfairly overshadow a simple fact: Oscar De La Hoya could fight and was willing to face anyone to prove it.

Although some hardcore Mexican fight fans dismissed him as too soft, too unwilling to engage in the kind of hand-to-hand combat they love best and, most of all, too willing to beat up fading Mexican idol Julio Cesar Chavez twice, the fact of the matter is De La Hoya came to fight. It was a point he made emphatically clear when he got off the floor to flatten Ike Quartey with that fight on the line, when he beat up Fernando Vargas after some early problems and when, in a close loss to Floyd Mayweather Jr., he inexplicably abandoned his jab for more lethal but less effective weapons in the second half of that fight.

As for Trinidad, he was the most popular Puerto Rican fighter of his time because of both his embraceable personality and his ability to destroy anyone he hit with one shot. But he also possessed the Achilles' heel of so many big punchers: a chin made in China. Trinidad got off the deck many times to destroy his opponents, which only added to his wild popularity and the drama of the moment whenever he entered the ring.

Even without the kind of rematches that punctuate the greatest rivalries in the sport's history, both were clearly Hall of Fame worthy on their first year of eligibility. No one could argue that De La Hoya ended his career having avoided anyone, and the fact Trinidad never granted De La Hoya a rematch was more a result of promotional rivalries, cable network wars and Trinidad's increasing waistline than any reticence on the fighters' part to face each other again.

Finally, come June 8, they will meet once again, this time when each has his fist cast for the Hall and accepts the sport's highest honor.

"This is the dream of everyone who puts on a pair of gloves and steps between the ropes," De La Hoya said. "Through the good and the bad, you always hope that when all is said and done, you put on good fights, entertained the fans and will be remembered for what you did in the ring.

"To know that I will be in the Hall of fame with the greats of this sport is humbling, but it also puts a smile on my face that isn't coming off anytime soon."

Recent years haven't always been the happiest for De La Hoya, who has battled addiction issues and entered rehab several times in an effort to get his private life in order, but his public life as a promoter continues to flourish. Trinidad, meanwhile, has been less public since retiring in 2009 after being beaten during an aborted comeback by Winky Wright and Roy Jones Jr. He spends nearly all his time in Puerto Rico raising his four daughters and living the life of a fistic icon.

"This is the biggest triumph of my career," Trinidad said. "This is a great honor for me, my father (Felix Sr., who trained him since the age of 12), my family and my whole team. I'm extremely happy to be inducted with all the Puerto Rican boxers already in the Hall of Fame."

Alongside the two of them will be Joe Calzaghe, the undefeated (46-0) super middleweight champion who is arguably Wales' greatest fighter; referee Richard Steele; British promoter Barry Hearn; journalist Graham Houston and photographer Neil Leifer. No one would dispute the worthiness of their credentials nor how fitting it is that Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya will enter the Hall of Fame together because together they made it possible for boxing's little big men like Mayweather, Jones, Manny Pacquiao, Juan Manuel Marquez, Erik Morales, Prince Naseem Hamed and so many others to earn heavyweight purses.

When Seth Abraham used to run HBO Sports, he believed boxing was a bifurcated affair. He would often say, "There is boxing, and then there is heavyweight boxing," meaning there was one set of interest and economic possibilities for guys like Sugar Ray Leonard or Marvin Hagler and a far different one for even mediocre heavyweights like Buster Douglas if they win on the right night, and certainly for the best of them like Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis.

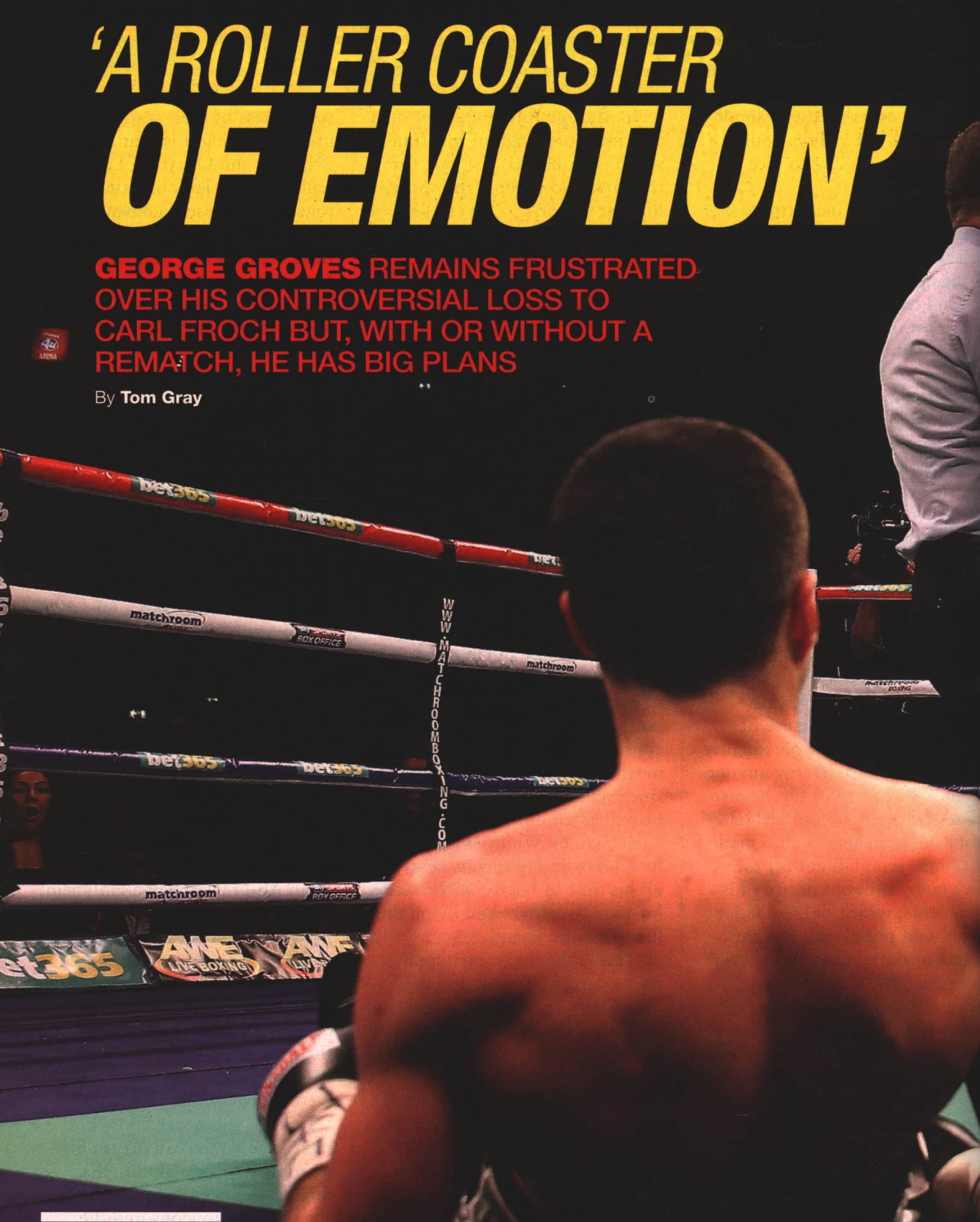
De La Hoya-Trinidad I-And-Only put the lie to that fiction but what might the numbers have been had they created the kind of classic trilogy (or more) of an Ali-Frazier, Bowe-Holyfield, Ward-Gatti, Barrera-Morales, Pacquiao-Marquez, Griffith-Paret or Zale-Graziano? What would a rematch have grossed had they fought a second time on Cinco de Mayo, the traditional date for a big Vegas fight card with a Mexican-Puerto Rican revenge factor throw in for emphasis?

This we will never know but next June 8 fans can dream for a moment or two about what might have been, reminded when the two Latino icons join the pantheon of the prize fighting's greatest names that once they squared off in a fight that changed their sport forever. It's a shame it took so long for them to meet again.

'A ROLLER COASTER OF EMOTION'

GEORGE GROVES REMAINS FRUSTRATED OVER HIS CONTROVERSIAL LOSS TO CARL FROCH BUT, WITH OR WITHOUT A REMATCH, HE HAS BIG PLANS

By **Tom Gray**



George Groves (right) got off to a good start – putting Carl Froch down in the first round – but things didn't end well for the young contender.

On Nov. 23, 2013, following months of hype and bad blood, the all-British showdown between IBF super middleweight titlist Carl Froch and unbeaten challenger George Groves ended on one of the most controversial calls by a referee in recent boxing history.

Groves, narrowly ahead on all scorecards in the ninth round, was caught above the ear by a looping right hand that affected his equilibrium. The young Londoner was shaken but remained upright and, although he absorbed a handful of solid headshots from the champion, he was firing back when referee Howard Foster set off a firestorm by halting the action.

Groves was devastated. The belt and a potential career-defining victory were gone in an instant. And while he was applauded for a surprisingly strong performance against one of the most respected fighters in the world, the pain has lingered.

At the same time, he tries to look philosophically at what he believes was an injustice as he plots his future.

"It has been a roller coaster of emotion," Groves told THE RING. "I'm absolutely gutted that I have a loss on my record, which is unjust. The only satisfaction I have is that almost everyone agrees with me, and this won't be forgotten about. I firmly believe that fans will associate Carl Froch's career with this fight and the controversy which surrounds it.

"People talk about how my stock has risen, but my stock would have risen regardless. The people who are close to me are gutted about what happened, but we're in this game

for the long haul, and I'm so appreciative of the support I've had from them, and boxing fans, during good times and bad.

"Everything happens for a reason. You can have a boring life, do your 9 to 5 and have nothing to show for it, or you can go out and do your best to enjoy life and experience everything it has to offer. I've experienced every emotion there is since that fight. Whether it's laughter or tears, at least you know you're living, and you have to be thankful for that."

Groves was installed as a significant underdog against Froch, and many believed his chances diminished further when he split from longtime trainer Adam Booth. Irishman Paddy Fitzpatrick, who had worked with both men as an assistant, was appointed chief second only 10 weeks prior to Groves' first world title bout.

Quiet and unassuming beforehand, the trainer proved his worth on fight night, but elected to unload with both barrels in the aftermath.

Fitzpatrick had been concerned beforehand that the perception by some that Groves has a questionable chin could work against him in the fight. And Fitzpatrick will tell you that it did in those final moments.

"There was no conclusion, and I was gutted," Fitzpatrick said. "At the rules meeting, the day before the fight, I spoke with Howard Foster. I said it has been in newspapers, nonstop, that Carl Froch is a warrior and George Groves has a glass chin. George has been hurt once in 19 fights, went down, and got up to stop Kenny Anderson in the very next round.

"This was going to be two men fighting for a world title, so I asked that both Carl Froch and George be treated accordingly. I was told my points would be

'I'M ABSOLUTELY GUTTED THAT I HAVE A LOSS ON MY RECORD, WHICH IS UNJUST. THE ONLY SATISFACTION I HAVE IS THAT ALMOST EVERYONE AGREES WITH ME.'
— GEORGE GROVES

Groves had the support of the fans at Phones 4U Arena in Manchester even in defeat.

taken into consideration. We had a lawyer taking notes, and this was all witnessed by the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBofC), the IBF and the WBA.

"After the stoppage, I advised Robert Smith (General Secretary of the BBBofC) that I would be reviewing the tape before contesting anything. He said that he appreciated me being professional enough to review the tape, then immediately went on Sky Sports television to say he was standing by his referee before we even presented our case.

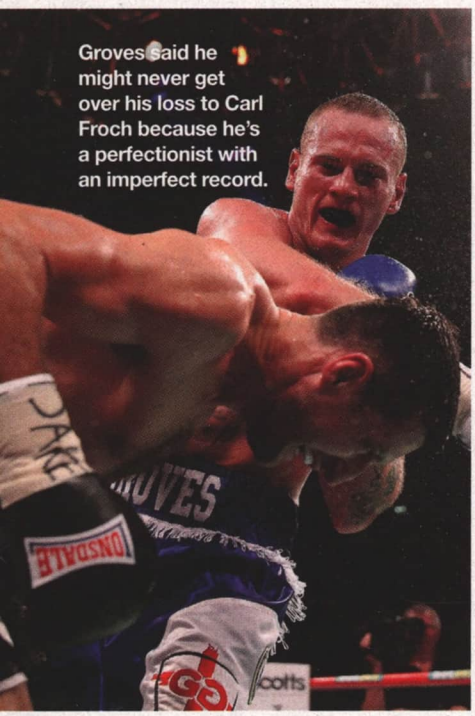
"Mr. Smith then calls me on the Monday morning (after the fight) and asks me to caution George about the way he's talking in relation to the stoppage. I said, 'Excuse me, Mr. Smith. Has George said anything that he is not legally entitled to say?' He said no, therefore I told him not to ask me to tell another man how to conduct himself."

What comes of the case that Groves' camp planned to present to the BBBofC remains to be seen, but one gets the feeling that the matter is far from concluded.

Foster has years of refereeing experience and is regarded by many within the boxing fraternity as a top-class official. Not only did he endure the immediate wrath of 20,000 fans and the intense pressure of suffocating media scrutiny but, in the days following the stoppage, he was also subjected to death threats.

"I've experienced that in the past, and it's awful," said Groves. "The temptation is there to give it the brush off, but you have to take it seriously, and it's terrible that Howard Foster has gone through this. People say horrible things these days, particularly through social media, and they think it's acceptable. I hope whoever is responsible is caught and brought to justice."

Froch mentioned a return



Groves said he might never get over his loss to Carl Froch because he's a perfectionist with an imperfect record.

fight during an uncomfortable post-fight interview but has since talked about closing out his career in Las Vegas, presumably against Andre Ward, who defeated him in December 2011. Groves initially said that he would move on, but that is easier said than done. He believes wholeheartedly that he deserves another shot at Froch.

"I can't say with any certainty if I'll ever get over it," Groves said. "I'm a perfectionist, and now I don't have a perfect record. Securing the rematch and beating him could convince people that I should have won the first time, but only time will tell if I get the chance to prove that. In the future I want to be regarded as a great fighter and losses don't help my cause.

"I'm not asking Carl Froch for any favors. I'm only asking for what's right."

Froch is in a difficult position. Does "The Cobra" live up to his warrior image by granting his countryman, and the public, the rematch everyone wants to see? Or, in the twilight of his career, does he point to his considerable past achievements to leave on his own terms?

Groves recognizes Froch's predicament while lobbying for a rematch.

"His pride will be hurt," said Groves. "If he goes into retirement, then everyone will know I put him there. And if he fights someone else, then everyone knows he's ducking me. How can he be regarded as this legendary fighter if he goes out of his way to avoid me? Still, he has suggested to the British press that he doesn't want it (the rematch).

"Carl has to be clever here and decide what he wants out of boxing. If he wants to leave the sport with his head held high, then a rematch with me is his only option. He can't delay it either, because nobody will be interested in him fighting anyone else. He has to fight me as soon as possible."

Of course, Groves would be just as confident going into a rematch as he was going into the first fight, perhaps even more so given what happened for eight-plus rounds.

"I would stop Carl Froch within six rounds," Groves said. "I looked at things objectively before the fight, but you don't really know until you've been in there. I learned a whole lot about Froch, and he wouldn't get past the halfway mark in a rematch. We've both talked a lot, and everyone knows who can back up their words and who can't.

Paddy Fitzpatrick, who will retain his place in Groves' corner, concurs with his fighter.

"I agree completely," said the trainer. "Froch has a granite chin, great conditioning and enormous desire to win. He has made that work for him at the highest level of the game, and you must respect that. Still, I wouldn't allow one of my amateurs to have their first fight with footwork like his. He will never cause George problems technically and is inept in that area.

"He makes the same mistakes round after round, and that won't change."

If the rematch doesn't happen, Groves should take solace in one fact: He has announced himself on the world scene at 168 pounds. He made it clear in defeat that he has the all-around ability to compete with anyone in the division, which makes him a very marketable young fighter.

Groves plans to take advantage of that newfound asset both at home and abroad.

"I would build my profile in the United States," he said. "I haven't topped the bill over there, and it's a logical step because Andre Ward could be a big money fight for me in the future. I want to become world champion, and I want to do that as quickly as I can. I'm not looking for the easy route, but the quickest route.

"I would fight anyone in the super middleweight division, and that includes Ward. He's the best, and even though I would prefer one or two fights first, if it was offered to me, I would take it next and be confident of beating him.

"People might look at me sideways and say that's not going to happen, but it would be the same people who said I didn't belong in the ring with Carl Froch. Ward is a completely different proposition, but with the correct game plan, I'm good enough to beat anyone."

"I want to unify the division, get the best out of myself, and I will settle for nothing less."

DANA WHITE RETURNS TO BOXING WITH REALITY SHOW

UFC PRESIDENT WANTS TO CREATE 'NEW BOXING TALENT'

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

Dana White said he wants to develop talent in a way similar to *The Ultimate Fighter.*

It could have been a scene out of *The Godfather Part III* – just when he thought he was out of boxing, they pulled him back in. But UFC President Dana White readily admits that when it comes to his new boxing reality show on Discovery Channel, *The Fighters*, "I dragged myself back into this one."

So why would the head of the biggest MMA promotional firm in the world decide to revisit the sport where he got his start, especially since past boxing reality shows *The Contender* and *The Next Great Champ* met with mixed reviews at best?

"My intention with this show is to turn it into something that creates new boxing talent," said White, a former amateur boxer who owned gyms in Boston and Las Vegas. "This season we focused on south Boston. The second season I want to bring in fighters from all over the country. There's tons of talent out there. I want to start to cultivate it and build it the same way *The Ultimate Fighter* does."

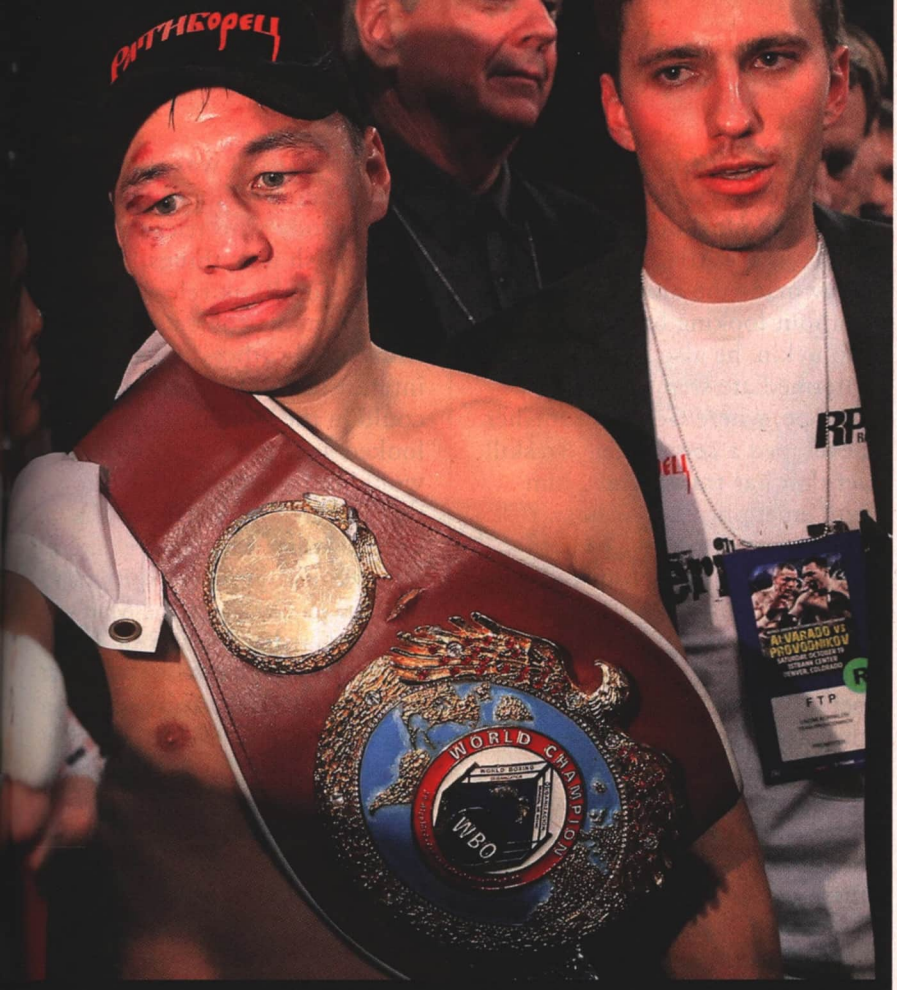
With the 19th season of *The Ultimate Fighter* having just wrapped taping in Las Vegas, White and production partner Craig Piligian obviously know something about the reality TV business. Now it's time to test the waters in boxing, not with a tournament format or established pros but with local trainers who will pit their top amateurs against one another in weekly bouts after viewers are introduced them.

It's unusual and it's risky, but that's just the way White likes it.

"I'm doing this because I love the sport and I want to do it, and I think that this is the right way to do it," he said. "We'll find out if this was the right way or not as soon as it airs. And if this thing works out, it could get interesting."

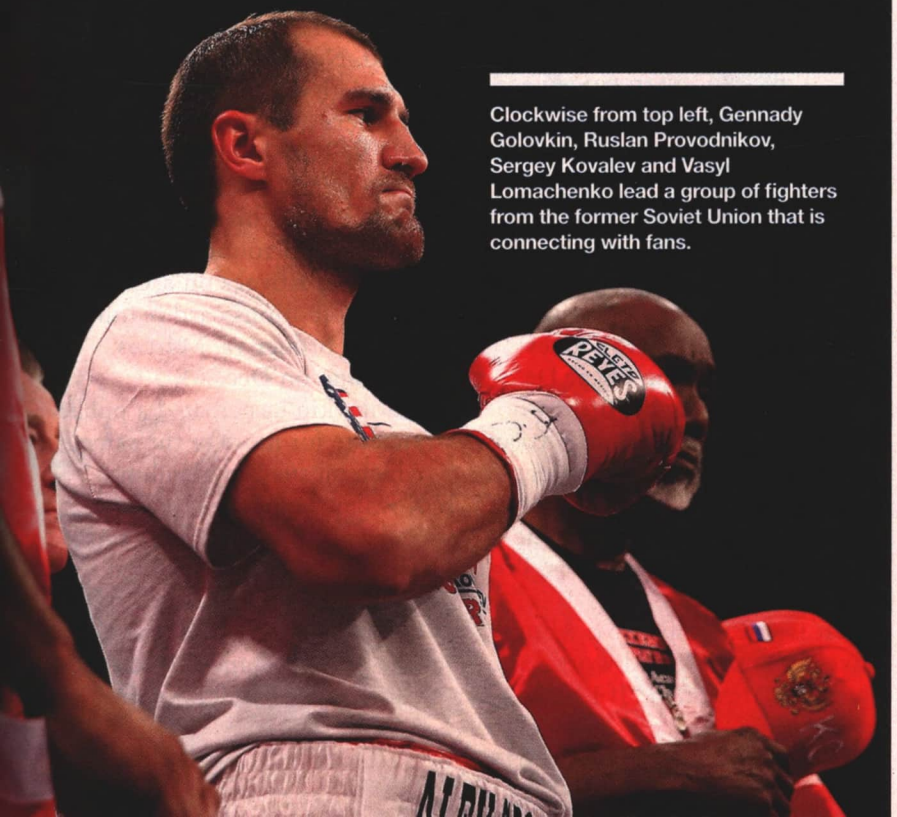
The eight-part series premieres Jan. 23 on Discovery Channel.

SOVIET INVASION



A GROWING NUMBER OF FIGHTERS FROM THE FORMER USSR ARE FINDING SUCCESS IN THE U.S.

By **Norm Frauenheim**



Clockwise from top left, Gennady Golovkin, Ruslan Provodnikov, Sergey Kovalev and Vasyl Lomachenko lead a group of fighters from the former Soviet Union that is connecting with fans.

It's called the former Soviet Union these days. But former isn't exactly forgotten, at least not among promoters, managers and probably a few wannabes who have descended on the 8.65-million square miles of diverse geography, languages and cultures in search of the next great prospect. Young fighters are arriving on American shores like imported vodka.

It's a trend, all right, in part because of Gennady Golovkin's ability to generate interest in a marketplace where skeptical television executives once thought there was none. Golovkin is beginning to produce strong television ratings. According to Nielsen Media Research, his November stoppage of Curtis Stevens drew an HBO audience of 1.41 million, about a 30 percent increase from his June knockout of Matthew Macklin. Within those numbers, there's leverage that enables Golovkin to market the punching power that has always been there.

Think about it this way: There's talk about a Golovkin fight against Andre Ward, who is a solid second to Floyd Mayweather Jr. in the pound-for-pound debate, yet an unproven attraction. If the Golovkin-Ward possibility ever reaches the negotiating table, Golovkin, an Olympic silver medalist for Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet era, might be a bigger draw than Ward, the last American to win gold.

No wonder there's a rush to mine what might be a rich vein of talent in the old Eastern Bloc. Success has no citizenship, but it gets a lot of followers. So get in line. Fighters from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan already

are. From Siberian welterweight Ruslan Provodnikov to Ukrainian featherweight Vasyl Lomachenko, they are suddenly showing up on major cards and getting major attention from an American audience that just a few years ago couldn't pronounce their names, much less recognize them. Once, they all sounded as if they belonged to that gray, faceless collection of aging Politburo officials standing on a Moscow balcony above Red Square. But, today, nobody confuses Russian Sergey Kovalev with anyone or anything other than what he is – one of the best light heavyweights in any hemisphere.

There's an inherent danger in any trend, of course. They often end as fast as empires. Sometimes, the race to find the next in line just leads to bupkus. But there's ample evidence and plenty of historical context to believe that this one has some staying power.

"Absolutely," says Tom Loeffler, managing director for Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko's company, K2, which promotes Golovkin. "I think you'll see more of them. They are fundamentally sound after years learning how to box as amateurs within that old Soviet system. They're also hungry fighters who grew up in very poor countries."

Loeffler believes the trend has its roots in the wake of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, five years after the symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall. Wladimir Klitschko won a gold medal in Atlanta and then turned pro with brother Vitali. Together, they turned the heavyweight division into a family business and virtually transformed it into the Eastern European property that it is today. Those same Olympics also produced Vassiliy Jirov, a gold medalist from Kazakhstan at light heavyweight who was voted the most outstanding boxer at the Atlanta Games. Jirov made the move to America without looking back. Unlike Golovkin, he also skipped an intermediate step, a stop in Europe, where Golovkin further developed a comprehensive skill set that has transformed him into emerging American star.

"Jirov was the first," Loeffler said. "He made that move long before anyone else."

Hindsight might say that Jirov's career would have been better served had he gone down the career path traveled by Golovkin, who continues to have a home in Germany and is scheduled to fight in Monaco in February. In 1996, however, there was no proven path. Top Rank signed Jirov immediately after the Atlanta Olympics, thinking that he had shown a versatile mix of skill that would allow him to break out of what was then a robotic style, the Soviet stereotype.

Jirov, at his best as a cruiserweight, had his moments, including a loss by decision to James Toney in THE RING's 2003 Fight of the Year. But he could never quite capture the public imagination enough to become a television draw. For Jirov, maybe it was just his timing. He arrived when all of the customers invested their pay-per-view money in Roy Jones Jr. and an emerging Oscar De La Hoya. Or, maybe, Jirov, who learned how to fight at a Moscow boxing academy while serving in the Red Army in the late 1980s, never could shake that robotic stereotype. Whatever it was, Jirov has no regrets.

"It is OK," said Jirov, who lives in Phoenix and works as a personal trainer. "If I help others because I was the first, that is a good thing. I cheer for anybody who tries to accomplish new things."

After Top Rank released Jirov from his contract and the Klitschko brothers found more interest in Germany than they could in the United States, it looked as if the boxing world would remain as divided as it was throughout the Cold War. Even Loeffler wasn't sure until Golovkin stopped Gabe Rosado on Jan. 19, 2013, at the Madison Square Garden Theater on a card that featured Mikey Garcia in a technical decision over Orlando Salido.

"It was tough, because television still wasn't sold on whether he was a real draw," Loeffler said. "But when I looked around, I saw a crowd that was there to see Gennady. That's when I knew. That's when I was certain we could make it work."

It's also a moment that eventually might be viewed as a turning point. It is when fighters from the former Soviet Union went from isolated undercard appearances to a developing trend. No card now seems to be complete without one.

"There are many more of us," said Beibut Shumenov, a light heavyweight from Kazakhstan who retained his WBA title with a third-round stoppage of Tomas Kovacs on a Golden Boy Promotions card featuring Adrien Broner vs. Marcos Maidana on Dec. 14.

Golovkin has created a public appetite for more of the same, which means Provodnikov, Kovalev, Lomachenko and perhaps a lot more from names we still don't know how to pronounce or spell. THE RING's 2013 Fight of the Year was the blood-and-guts classic put up by Provodnikov, a

Brothers Vitali (left) and Wladimir Klitschko are two of the most successful fighters from a former Soviet republic.

OUT OF THE USSR

A POUND-FOR-POUND TOP 10 OF FIGHTERS FROM NATIONS THAT WERE FORMERLY REPUBLICS OF THE SOVIET UNION.

1. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO (UKRAINE) – SECOND-LONGEST CHAMPIONSHIP REIGN IN HEAVYWEIGHT HISTORY.

2. KOSTYA TSZYU (RUSSIA) – WORLD'S BEST JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT FROM 2000 TO 2005.

3. VITALI KLITSCHKO (UKRAINE) – IF HIS KO RATIO (87.23 PERCENT) WORKS IN POLITICS, HE'LL WIN IN UKRAINE.

4. VIC DARCHINYAN (ARMENIA) – HAS BEEN A TITLEHOLDER OR CONTENDER FOR MORE THAN A DECADE.

5. YURI ARBACHAKOV (RUSSIA) – FIRST-EVER RUSSIAN CHAMP WAS A DOMINATING FLYWEIGHT IN THE 1990S.

6. VASSILIY JIROV (KAZAKHSTAN) – EX-CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMP WAS FIRST TO GAIN WORLDWIDE ATTENTION AT 1996 OLYMPICS.

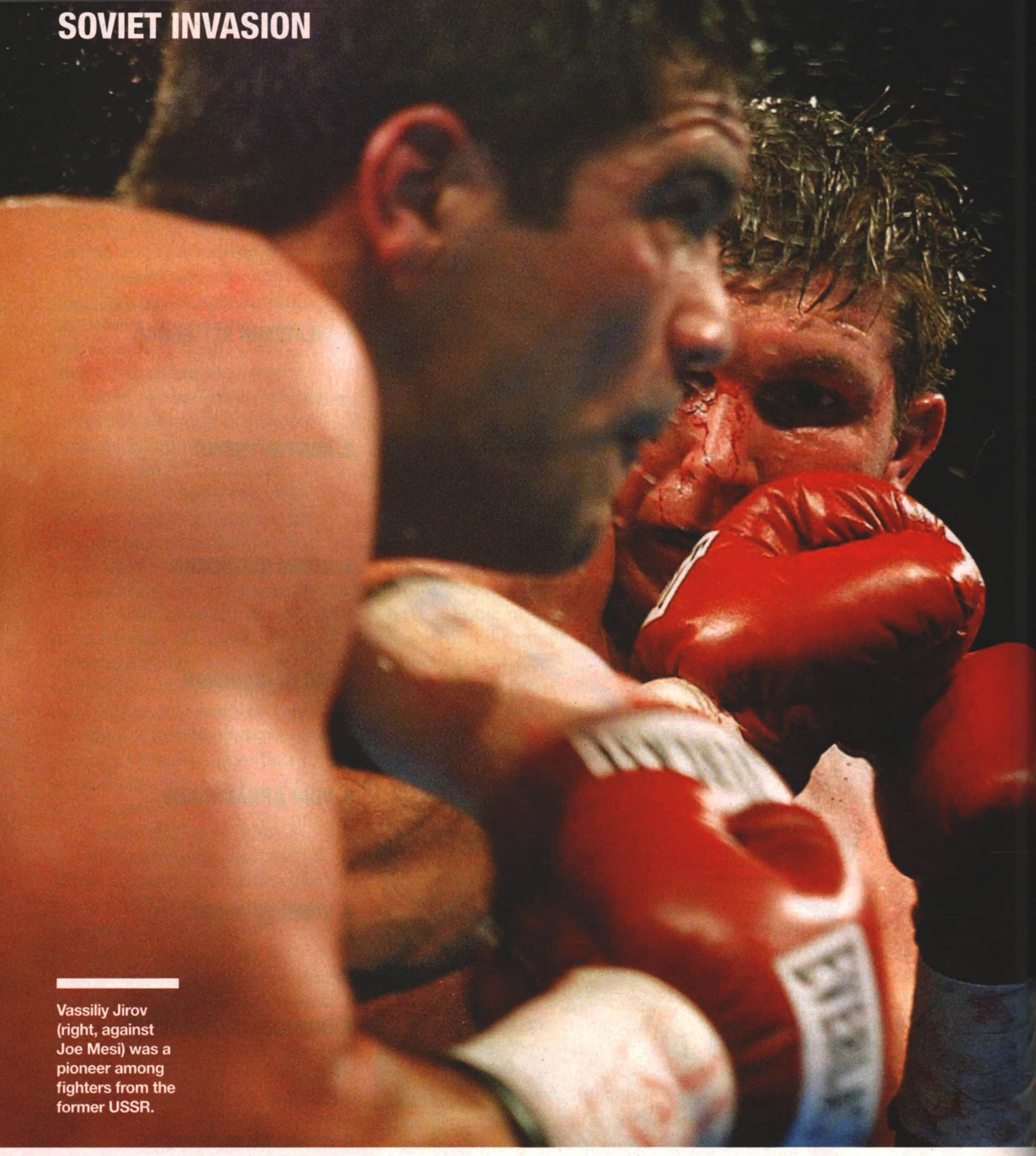
7. ORZUBEK NAZAROV (KYRGYZSTAN) – HELD A MAJOR LIGHTWEIGHT TITLE FOR FIVE YEARS.

8. GENNADY GOLOVKIN (KAZAKHSTAN) – ON THE BRINK OF BECOMING A MAJOR PAY-PER-VIEW STAR.

9. SERGEY KOVALEV (RUSSIA) – MIGHT BE THE BEST IN THE LOADED LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT DIVISION.

10. RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV (RUSSIA) – THE NEXT TSZYU?

— **Norm Frauenheim**



Vassiliy Jirov (right, against Joe Mesi) was a pioneer among fighters from the former USSR.

Banner Promotions fighter who introduced himself to the U.S. audience in losing a welterweight war with Timothy Bradley.

Kovalev put his name, front and center, into the public debate about what fight it most wants to see when the Main Events-promoted light heavyweight scored a second-round knockout of Ismayl Sillakh in Quebec City on the same night that Adonis Stevenson scored a sixth-round TKO of Tony Bellew. If the public can't get Mayweather-Manny Pacquiao, it will be very happy to see Kovalev-Stevenson.

Then, there's Lomachenko, the two-time Olympic gold medalist and the outstanding boxer at the 2012 London Games who is promoted by Top Rank. Lomachenko has either one or seven pro fights – depending on whether you count "semi-pro" bouts – yet has a major title in his sights on March 1 against Salido, who holds the WBO version of the 126-pound title.

There's nothing slow about this

trend. It's moving at bullet-train speed, in part because of a style that has evolved from robotic to fundamental, from well-schooled to improvisational. It's as if Ivan Drago, the Russian character in that Rocky sequel, learned some Mayweather soul and shoulder roll. As fast as it seems to be happening, however, nothing about the ongoing evolution is easy.

"Not at all," says Vadim Kornilov, who manages Provodnikov and five others, including Russian light heavyweight prospect Egor Mekhontsev. "It's really a process in getting these kids with a known American trainer and in a gym where some of the big names train. You have to convince people that some of these kids can fight. You also have to get them the kind of training that gets them ready to fight like an American pro."

Provodnikov is a defining example of exactly that process. Kornilov, who lives and works in Southern California, brought Provodnikov from Siberia's chill to the U.S. years before Golovkin's first American appearance, a fifth-round stoppage of Gregorz Proksa, in September 2012 in Verona, N.Y. Provodnikov appeared on a card at Foxwoods in Mashantucket, Conn., in 2007, scoring a first-round KO of somebody named Antwon Barrett.

"Between now and then, he's a completely different fighter," Kornilov said. "There's just no comparison."

Provodnikov came to the U.S. with about 150 amateur bouts on his resume, but – unlike Golovkin – it included no Olympic medal or world championships. There was just the trademark toughness that came from growing up in a place where, according to Kornilov, life revolves around hunting, fishing and drinking.

"A very, very hard place to live," Kornilov said of Provodnikov's hometown, Beryozovo, which also happens to be where Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky escaped from his captors in 1907 on his way to a Siberian exile. "It's a place that really created a deep hunger in him to fight, fight his way out and to something different. But he also had to learn how. And he had to get noticed."

He did so at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood, where he was durable and resilient enough to become a Pacquiao sparring partner. That resulted in some inevitable attention, both from Roach and in the media. It also led to a contract offer from Artie Pelullo of Banner Promotions, who went to Russia to scout one Russian and then heard about Provodnikov. Pacquiao's sparring partners get Roach's guidance and sometimes a big fight. For Provodnikov, it was Bradley in a loss that won him respect and some priceless name recognition. Next, it was Mike Alvarado, whom he upset in a Denver suburb. Now, his name has appeared on the short list of possibilities for Pacquiao in the Filipino's next fight after a comeback victory over Brandon Rios.

The next in this trend includes countless possibilities. In each, there's only one sure thing. To wit: The Soviet robot is long gone. Dmitriy Salita, a welterweight and promoter, has his own ideas as to why, some of which are shared by Loeffler. Salita was born in Odessa, Ukraine, and also has his own prospect from the former Soviet Union. He is middleweight Levgen Khytrov, also a Ukrainian whose amateur record is reported to include more than 500 bouts and a significant victory. He won a 2010 world championship over Ryota Murata, a Japanese prospect who has signed with Top Rank.

The 25-year-old Khytrov, who was scheduled to make his pro debut on Dec. 18, was 3 years old when the Soviet Union collapsed. He learned boxing in the old Soviet schools that are still there. But he grew up in a time when he also had to think for himself.

"He grew up in an era where, like in America, you have to improvise to survive," said Salita, who has his own company, Star of David Promotions. "When that Soviet system was in place, you were told what to do, exactly how to do it and when to do it. If they told you put your right hand in this place and you left in that place, that's exactly what you did every time. Put one foot here, put your other foot there. There was a formula, and it was strictly followed.

"But when that system went away, these guys had to take all of those fundamentals and use them in different ways. They learned how to adjust. They added flexibility to the way they fight. I really think that's been [the key] to what's happening right now. We're just beginning to see a new brand of fighter from that part of the world. They are thinking fighters who know the fundamentals better than anybody. But now they also know to adjust. It makes them dangerous for any opponent."

And impossible to ignore for any fan witnessing a trend that packs some game-changing potential. RING

COLD WARRIOR

FROM FRIGID SIBERIA, **RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV** NOW LEADS THE INFLUX OF RUSSIAN BOXERS MAKING THEIR NAMES IN THE U.S.

By **Bernard Fernandez**

Boxing fans these days don't seem to care where a fighter comes from. They just want to be entertained by warriors willing to spill blood for them inside the ropes, regardless of their background.

That's why Ruslan Provodnikov fits in perfectly in the U.S., where he is conducting his career. The 29-year-old "Siberian Rocky" demonstrated first on ESPN and then on premium cable that he serves up blood, guts and anything else it takes to win fights and entertain the crowd, which has made him very popular very quickly.

Provodnikov and Timothy Bradley gave the world the most thrilling fight of 2013, Bradley winning a decision. Then the Russian gave an encore performance, stopping Mike Alvarado in another riveting battle to win the WBO junior welterweight title – his first major belt.

Provodnikov doesn't seem capable of being in a bad fight. Thus, the fans love him. And he apparently loves them back.

"I like fighting in the U.S. most of all because of the fans," he said through a translator. "They will love you for the way you fight and not for where you are from. That is really important, and I really enjoy that. It's all about the way you fight and the excitement you bring to the ring."

Provodnikov has always had that all-out attacking style, which he first demonstrated as a child in his frigid hometown of Beryozovo, Russia, where temperatures in winter can drop to an almost unfathomable 47 degrees below zero.

Maybe he threw so many punches to keep warm.

"No, my style is a part of me and always has been," Provodnikov said when asked if he had made adjustments to make himself more appealing to action-craving U.S. audiences. "The way I fight is in my character and in my blood. I think that everyone has his own style of fighting. You can't change it even if you tried."

How Provodnikov came to the U.S., and his rapid ascent as a must-see attraction here and elsewhere, makes for quite a story. And it's not just that he is from a small village (the

Fans are attracted to Ruslan Provodnikov because of his relentless, all-action style of fighting.

population of Beryozovo is 7,287, according to the 2010 census) in a country that to the outside world must seem as if it is perpetually frozen.

His mother is Mansi, an indigenous people of whom only 12,500 remain, most of them concentrated in western Siberia.

"It is similar in a way," Provodnikov said when asked whether the Mansi are comparable to Native Americans in the U.S. "We are the national people of the Khanty-Mansiysk region, and the population of Mansis is continually dropping for several reasons. It is part of my legacy to make sure that our people continue to believe in themselves, and to continue to believe that anything is possible."

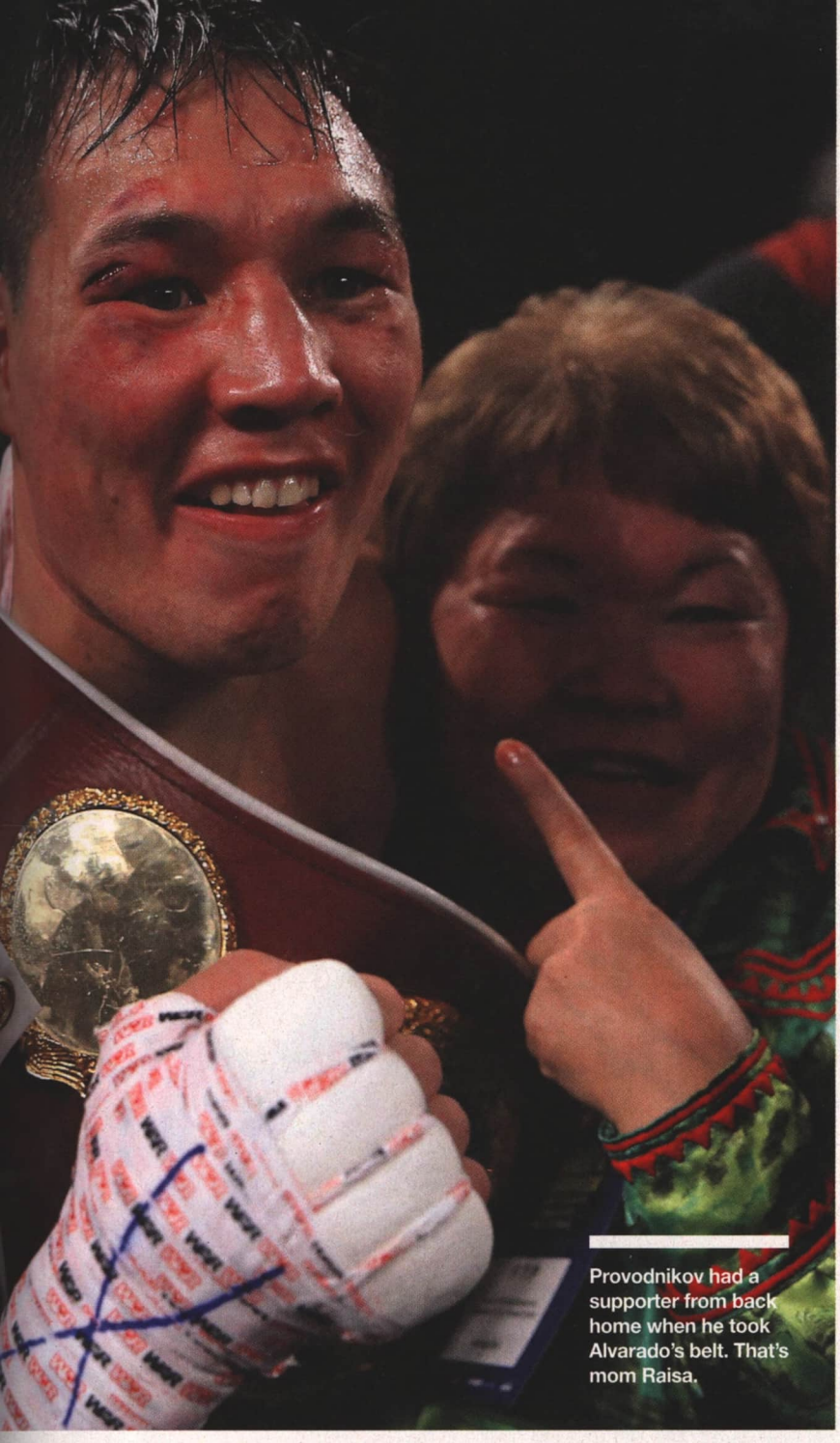
It isn't as if Banner Promotions president Art Pelullo, the Philadelphia-based promoter who also advised Brazilian star Acelino Freitas and U.K. attraction Ricky Hatton in the U.S., headed off to Russia with the specific idea of signing the young Mansi fighter.

Pelullo had never heard of Provodnikov, in fact, when his plane touched down in Moscow in 2007. He just knew that Eastern Europe was emerging as a breeding ground of talented, hungry guys eager to make their mark in professional boxing, and he wanted to provide some of them with the opportunity to do so.

"At the time, Hatton was still fighting for me, and Freitas' career was winding down," Pelullo recalled. "I just took a chance. I was looking for new guys, new talent, and I knew some Russian promoters I had done some minor business with in the past. I was already selling Freitas and Hatton fights to [Russian TV's] Channel 1 and Channel 2, so it was a dual-purpose kind of trip. I had just gotten off a 15-hour flight and wanted to go to my room to change, but the guys I was to meet with were in the lobby at 11 in the morning, Moscow time, drinking vodka, so I never even went to my room.

"I started talking to Rinat Yusupov and German Titov and told them I wanted to bring some Russian fighters to the United States and develop them on ESPN. I told them we could open up a new market because there weren't a lot of Russian fighters appearing in the U.S. at the time. They liked the idea, but they were probably a little skeptical that I would actually do what I said I would. They

Provodnikov's victory over Mike Alvarado earned him his first world title.



Provodnikov had a supporter from back home when he took Alvarado's belt. That's mom Raisa.

probably thought I would try to steal their fighters."

But one thing led to another and Pelullo began to bring some of the Russian fighters over, a couple at a time, to test the waters. One of those was Provodnikov who, Pelullo said, "was just one of the guys in the group. But he fought his first fight with me, a four-rounder on a Freitas undercard at Foxwoods [in Mashantucket, Conn.] and from that point on we started using him more and more.

"Russell Peltz was my matchmaker at the time, and he said, 'Artie, you got something here.' I said, 'I think you're right.'"

Pelullo's stable of Russian fighters now includes former WBO middleweight champion Dmitry Pirog, Maxim Vlasov, Fedor Papazov, Evgeny Chuprakov, Alisher Rahimov and Sherzod Husanov (the last two are originally from Uzbekistan). But the lead pony undoubtedly is Provodnikov, who revealed himself as prime TV material in the Bradley and Alvarado fights. Bradley took so many hard shots that many wondered whether his career would be permanently altered. Alvarado took such a battering that he did not come out for the 11th round. Both of those bouts were televised by HBO.

Provodnikov is now among the possible opponents for Manny Pacquiao, which would be lucrative but complicated. Top Rank President Bob Arum has the option of co-promoting Provodnikov's next bout with Pelullo and has expressed interest in making the fight. But a potential snag is the fact that Provodnikov and Pacquiao are both trained by Freddie Roach and friends.

"It definitely is a barrier," Provodnikov said. "I do not want to enter the ring for any fight without Freddie Roach, and it would be very hard for me to fight Manny Pacquiao, who I have a lot of respect for and have been training with for a very long time."

Roach, a five-time Boxing Writers Association of America Trainer of the Year, already has indicated he would opt to work with Pacquiao, who has been with him longer, if a Pacquiao-Provodnikov bout were to be made.

But, of course, such pronouncements won't stop anyone from speculating about what surely would be one of the more intriguing matchups that could be made at this time. Pelullo and Arum both think any and all potential snags could be

PROVODNIKOV
TECATE

Provodnikov always had ability and a warrior's mentality. Trainer Freddie Roach (foreground) has refined his technique.

smoothed out if the payday for each fighter is hefty enough.

"Provodnikov can win that fight, and if he does, a new superstar is born," Pelullo said. "With Ruslan's style, he's going to be right in front of Manny. A lot of people perceive we can win the fight. I know I definitely think we can win the fight. Ruslan knows how to cut off the ring, and he'd bring too much pressure and tenacity for Manny to handle at this point of his career."

Arum conceded that Provodnikov is very much in the mix. "Assuming that the [Floyd] Mayweather thing doesn't come together, the three guys we're looking at now, and it's not exclusive of others, are [Juan Manuel] Marquez, Bradley and Provodnikov," he said.

What about the potential holdup involving Roach and those warm, fuzzy feelings of friendship between Pacquiao and Provodnikov?

"It could be Provodnikov publicly is saying he's not interested [in fighting Pacquiao] as a way to jack up the money, but he told me privately that he wants that fight, and his managers [Vadim Kornilov and Andrei Napolskikh] want him to take that fight," Arum said.

Pelullo was scheduled to make an appearance, as promised, at an amateur tournament in Beryozovo that Provodnikov is hosting from Feb. 5-7. It can be presumed that Pelullo would try to nudge him into accepting a fight with Pacquiao, providing the promoter's teeth aren't chattering too much.

Told that the thermometer in that part of Siberia can hit minus-40 degrees and even colder in early February, Pelullo said, "It's that cold? Oh, well. My wife did buy me some longjohns."

FROCH SHOULD GIVE GROVES A REMATCH

ONLY A SECOND FIGHT WOULD END THE DEBATE OVER WHAT MIGHT'VE HAPPENED IN THEIR FIRST MEETING

By **Gareth A Davies**

It was as inconclusive as it was unsatisfactory for both seasoned IBF super middleweight titleholder Carl Froch and challenger George Groves. The buildup to their thriller in Manchester, England, was testy, and the battle was brilliant, but it came to a careening halt in the ninth round.

The roadblock was referee Howard Foster.

The outcome divided the fighters – who came out for separate post-fight news conferences and have indulged in plenty of political PR moves since – the media and the fans, with internet forums and radio waves swaying to the beat of two diverse drums.

Froch felt he was denied the finish he thought he would go on to get. Groves insisted he was on the way to a famous victory and not in as much trouble as he had looked in that ninth round from the ringside seats.

Whatever way you look at it, it left a well in the stomach, an aching for a conclusion. That could only come in a rematch, and although it was offered, there is nothing concrete and nothing in writing.

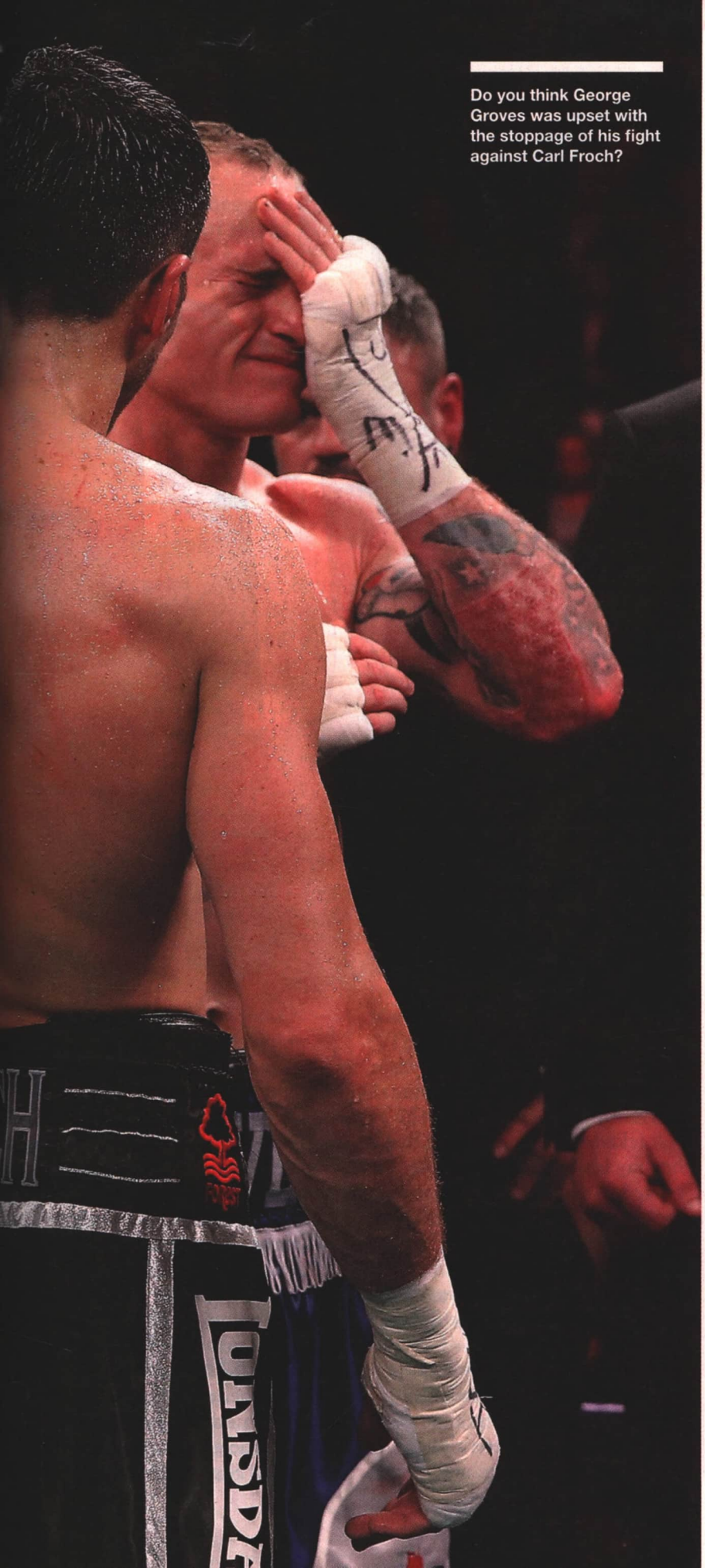
My view is that Froch should enter into a rematch. As a young fighter, he bemoaned the fact that he never got to face Joe Calzaghe. Now he has Groves looking – leering perhaps – toward him.

Froch is a proud man, an even prouder warrior, and yet business may see him take the money options to fight in the United States. He has a business agreement with Eddie Hearn. They work as partners.

Predictably, the British Boxing Board of Control supported the third man in the ring, Howard Foster.

Robert Smith, secretary of the BBBofC, told me the day after the bout: "Howard Foster had to make the decision in a split second, he made his call, and I back him.

"He does not have the benefit of several replays on television or a monitor. He was six inches away from the fighters, he is looking at the fighter's eyes, and



Do you think George Groves was upset with the stoppage of his fight against Carl Froch?

he has the health, safety and interest of the fighter at heart.

"Howard Foster is a world-class professional. Another punch could have made a massive difference to George's career."

We all understand the reasoning that too early is better than too late whenever it comes to the safety of a boxer, yet in a championship bout of this magnitude, it left a legion of spectators feeling aggrieved.

The bout had grown exponentially during the buildup, Groves playing the "angry young man" foil to perfection, the antithesis of Froch's insistence that the challenger had "disrespected" the champion. This was nonsense, of course.

Groves, indeed, proved true to his word in the fight. And Froch proved once again that he is made of granite, though how long he can continue to absorb the sort of blows he has done in a decorated career remains to be seen.

If it were by popular demand, the two would meet again in the summer, in a football stadium, in what would be the fight of the year in the U.K.

Froch, who was booed by

U.K. TOP 10

1. **CARL FROCH**
2. **AMIR KHAN**
3. **KELL BROOK**
4. **CARL FRAMPTON**
5. **RICKY BURNS**
6. **GEORGE GROVES**
7. **TYSON FURY**
8. **SCOTT QUIGG**
9. **MARTIN MURRAY**
10. **NATHAN CLEVERLY**

Five more (in alphabetical order): Paul Butler, Frankie Gavin, James DeGale, Matthew Macklin and Billy Joe Saunders.

THROUGH FIGHTS OF DEC. 15

the crowd in Manchester after the fight, may find himself under pressure from the public. He might have been more gracious toward Groves, who delivered a mighty message. Groves, meanwhile, celebrated like a champion in a rarified atmosphere akin to the Coliseum in Rome on the night. Thumbs were up for him.

Father time and Groves' fast hands aided the younger fighter, as evidenced by his first-round knockdown of Froch, who took several rounds to fully recover. The scoring also divided opinion, 76-75 on two cards and 78-73 on the third. It caused another ream of debate. I saw Groves three ahead, but Froch coming on strong.

They were about to enter virgin territory for Groves at this level and familiar waters for Froch in a coruscating battle of will and assault that might've become a contender for Fight of the Year. Sadly, maddeningly, we will never know how it might have played out. Only a rematch would close the debate about the first nine rounds between them.

What's clear is that Groves belongs at world level. He has every chance of becoming a world champion in 2014. Whether that will be against Froch remains to be seen. He may have to wait until Froch has fought the likes of Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. or Andre Ward before the rematch materializes.

CALZAGHE, HEARN HONORED

★ The much lighter news from the last month was that Joe Calzaghe and promoter Barry Hearn will be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in June.

Calzaghe, the undefeated former two-weight world champion, will be presented with his ring alongside Oscar De La Hoya and Felix Trinidad in the Class of 2014 at the 25th annual convention in Canastota, N.Y.

Turns out promoter Barry Hearn, newly elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame, can throw down himself to some degree.

Racked with the pressure that he may lose a fight, Calzaghe retired from boxing with a record of 46-0, closing his career with two high-profile victories over Bernard Hopkins and a faded Roy Jones Jr. He was down early in both those fights but came back to win.

Calzaghe, a genuinely modest person, called it a "massive, massive honor," and as time goes by since his retirement almost four years ago, he becomes more and more loved, and indeed, his achievements appreciated.

"To be up there with all the legends is the ultimate honor for me," said the "Italian Dragon," who turns 42 in March.

Hearn started life in boxing when he co-promoted Frank Bruno's heavyweight showdown with Joe Bugner at White Hart Lane stadium in 1987.

Hearn promoted more than 600 shows in his 25 years in boxing, being the guiding hand behind some of the U.K.'s true greats in Chris Eubank, Nigel Benn, Lennox

Lewis and, late in his career, Prince Naseem Hamed.

"I am deeply honored to be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame," said Hearn. "To stand alongside some of my heroes of this great sport in the ring, the great trainers and some important people behind the scenes, it's a very proud moment."

Hearn told me an amusing story recently about "blooding" his son Eddie, who is developing himself into a formidable boxing entrepreneur.

Eddie, now the fuel behind Matchroom's burgeoning boxing stable, had been sent to a private school by his father, but in order to ground him, he said to his son that when he reached 18 years of age, they would box three rounds.

"I didn't want him to think he had grown up with a silver spoon in his mouth, and wanted him to see the real world. By the time he was 16, he was already a big lump, so I called him in for the three rounds," recalled Barry, who was 48 at the time.

They headed down to the Matchroom headquarters. They donned headguards, put on gloves, and in went the gum shields.

"My mum had said, 'don't you dare hurt him,'" said Eddie, grinning from ear to ear as he relayed this recently. "The bell rang, I hit him with a big shot and he didn't move. I gave him all I had, and then he came back with a body shot in the second which floored me.

"It was a terrible moment, because I've been reminded of it for the last 18 years."

BELLEW-CLEVERLY II?

★ Tony Bellew's light heavyweight world title pursuit ended with his second career defeat against WBC and RING light heavyweight titleholder Adonis Stevenson. He decided to move up to the cruiserweight division and now looks likely to battle Nathan Cleverly again.

Like Cleverly, after Sergey Kovalev defeated him in August to take his WBO title, Bellew believes he could put on the extra pounds and be successful. It's worth recalling that as an amateur, Bellew campaigned at heavyweight.

Cleverly, of course, was the only man to have beaten Bellew before his meeting with Stevenson.

BARKER FINISHED?

★ Darren Barker's brief reign as IBF middleweight champion came to an end after 5 minutes, 9 seconds in a ring with Felix Sturm on Dec. 7 in Stuttgart, Germany. Barker was stopped in the second round after two knockdowns, as Sturm became Germany's first four-time world champion.

Barker had had arthroscopic surgery on both hips and he suffered an injury to one of them as he twisted in the opening round. He could not hold his balance as he was easily knocked twice to the floor in the second stanza by clubbing left hooks.

There is a clause in the contract for a rematch in London, but there was no sign as THE RING went to press in mid-December whether Barker would opt for retirement or a rematch with Sturm, who held the WBA belt between 2007 and 2012.

Sturm showed why his heavy, accurate hands have kept him at world level for a decade. For Barker, this was agony in more ways than one.

Barker was in so much physical and emotional anguish after the fight, he did not appear at the post-fight news conference.

A statement was sent to selected members of the media the morning after. It read:

"I'm gutted, but the best man won. I am a little sore this morning, but I don't want to put the blame on the hip. He beat me fair and square.

"It was far from the game plan [to go out throwing]. I just had a nightmare with my right hip. I had a problem with it a month before the fight in sparring, and it was uncomfortable when I threw my right, but I managed it. ...

"But Felix deserves huge credit for the fight. He caught me and was then all over me and finished the job. I'm healthy and strong, but it's still raw and it hurts, both physically and my pride. But I am proud of my career. I never dreamed that I would become a world champion, but I did it, and I'm very proud that I can say that.

"The Daniel Geale fight took a lot out of me. I had to dig so deep, but my body doesn't seem to want to hold up."

On retirement, he added: "I think my body is answering that question for me. I can't train properly for these fights. I badly wanted to win [on Dec. 7], I really wanted to give it everything, but it wasn't meant to be. I was so confident of beating him and so confident in my body."

I traveled back to the U.K. on the same flight as Barker and many of his friends and family. He said he was "very sore" as he hobbled onto the plane. He looked crestfallen.

As THE RING went to press, there was still no conclusive news from the hip specialist on Barker's injury.

Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent for *The Telegraph*, London.

George Foreman (left) and Larry Holmes proved you can win fights beyond the typical retirement age.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIMITS ARE OLD NEWS

FATHER TIME TAKES AN INEVITABLE TOLL ON BOXERS, BUT ADVANCED AGE ISN'T AN INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE

By **Scott LaFee**

Back in 1990, George Foreman, then 41-years-old, was asked what he thought about rumors that fellow boxers Larry Holmes, also 41, and Jerry Quarry, 45, were considering comebacks.

"That's a shame," Foreman told the Associated Press. "There should be a mandatory retirement age for boxers."

And what age would that be, he was asked.

"65."

It was a joke, of course, though not entirely. At the time, Foreman was well into a comeback after a 10-year hiatus from boxing and would regain the heavyweight title four years later with a 10th-round knockout of Michael Moorer.

Three years later, Foreman would retire for good at 48.

Unlike the Olympics, which prohibits boxers older than age 40 (raised last year from 34), there is no upper age limit in professional boxing. If a few decades ago an active boxer in his 30s was generally deemed old and odd, that's no longer the case.

Though far from the norm, there is no shortage these days of boxers still attempting to competitively put up their dukes in their 30s, 40s, even occasionally in their 50s, often with notable success.

In 2009, for example, 35-year-old Juan Manuel Marquez knocked out 27-year-old Juan Diaz in the 9th round of a thrilling WBO/WBA lightweight championship bout that this magazine subsequently declared the Fight of the Year. Diaz retired two years later, but Marquez is still boxing.

That same year, 37-year-old "Sugar" Shane Mosley unexpectedly mauled the younger, favored Antonio Margarito, winning in a 9th-round technical knockout.

And then there's the ongoing saga of Bernard Hopkins, who at the astounding age of 48 thumped 31-year-old Tavoris Cloud last year to capture the IBF light heavyweight title. In

doing so, Hopkins surpassed his own record as the oldest fighter in history to win a major world championship.

(For the record, it's not as easy to figure out who's the oldest person to have ever boxed professionally. Data are incomplete, the decision split. *The Guinness Book of World Records* cites British cruiserweight Steve Ward, who defeated Pete McJob in a non-sanctioned 2011 bout at the age of 55, but others acknowledge junior welterweight Saoul Mamby, who lost to Anthony Osbourne in a 2008 bout at the age of 60.)

Aside from time-defying marvels like Hopkins, the question for most boxers considering a career past their 30s is whether they can fight effectively. Age may provide cagey experience, but can the body accommodate its punishing demands?

A boxer like Hopkins is rare. "He's a combination of genetics, discipline and special knowledge," said his trainer, Naazim Richardson. But even Hopkins does not and cannot fight as he did earlier in his career.

Boxing is a muscular game, but muscles are among the physiological attributes to suffer first and foremost with age. Skeletal muscle mass naturally deteriorates over time, a process called sarcopenia. These are the lean muscles that attach to your bones and are under voluntary control (as opposed to, say, cardiac muscle).

It's estimated that total muscle mass decreases by nearly 50 percent for most people between the ages of 20 and 90. The decline typically becomes noticeable around age 40 and accelerates rapidly after 75. A baby has more muscle (or at least the makings of it) than an 80-year-old man: roughly 500,000 muscle fibers in a biceps compared to a reduced 300,000 eight decades later.

Just as boxers lose muscle over time, so too do they lose the nerve fibers that transmit signals from the brain to the hands, arms and legs. Messages to throw a blow or bob and weave travel more slowly over fewer fibers, resulting in the inevitable diminishment of quickness.

Adding insult to injury, biochemical processes that repair muscle damage become less efficient with age and tendons (the cord-like tissues that connect muscle to bone) lose water content, making them stiffer and less resilient.

These are unavoidable physiological phenomena. No boxer can duck or dodge them forever.

On the other hand, Darryl Hudson, a Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.-based trainer, said boxers can delay the end by delaying the beginning. It's a matter of "ring age."

"Some guys start boxing later in life so they don't have as many fights in their past. Other guys fight a long time but never get seriously hurt," Hudson said. "These variables influence how long a guy can fight. Quickness and speed diminish with age, but sometimes it's also due to past injuries. Damage to ankles, knees and hips will all slow a boxer down, reducing their ability to get out of the way [of a punch]."

Hudson offers another reason why some boxers are fighting longer.

They don't fight as much.

"Guys don't fight like they used to. There's a lot more picking and choosing. Maybe they do a fight a year. It gives them longevity, but it's kind of boring, too." RING

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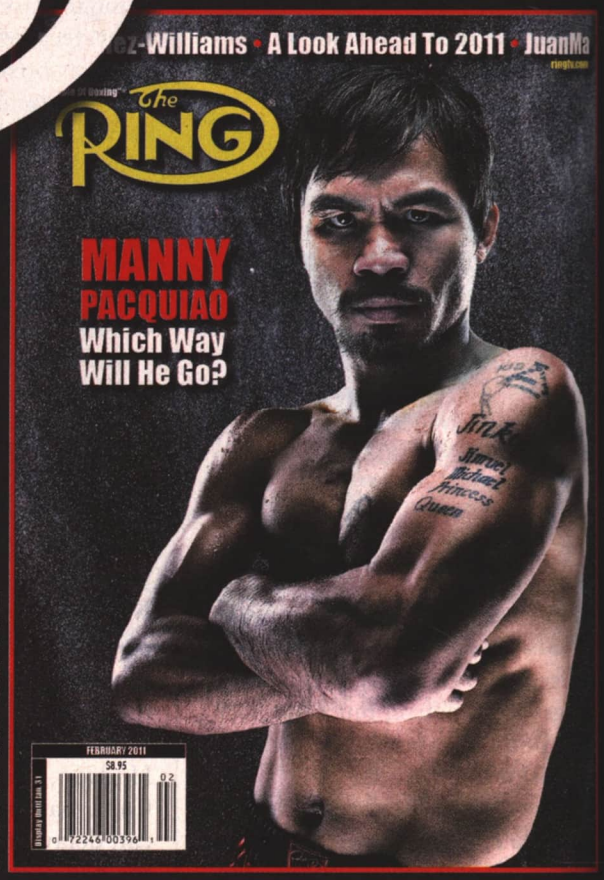

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Lucia Rijker (wearing bandana) and protégé Diana Prazak both figured prominently in this year's awards.

BEST OF THE BEST IN 2013

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

The talent level in women's boxing is higher now than ever, which made the process of selecting THE RING's annual award winners particularly difficult. Many did special things in 2013. However, it's our job to determine the best of the best. Here are our winners.

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Jessica Chavez

One often can tell the quality of fighters by the people who surround them. In the case of Jessica Chavez, THE RING Fighter of the Year, having renowned coach Ignacio "Nacho" Beristain in her corner certainly speaks volumes.

The 25-year-old former IBF and WBF junior flyweight titleholder hasn't lost in 10 fights since 2011. And she had another banner year in 2013 fighting only in her home country of Mexico, where women's boxing is not just accepted, but embraced wholeheartedly by fans, promoters, and television executives.

"Kika" kicked off the year in February with a 10-round decision over Irma Sanchez to win the WBC Silver title at 108 pounds. In June, she avenged a 2009 loss to Yesica Yolanda Bopp, handing the Argentine her first pro loss via unanimous decision. Then came a one-sided decision over Japan's respected Tenkai Tsunami in July.

And while a draw with noted spoiler Arely Mucino marred her perfect year in November, there is every reason to believe that Chavez could return to this spot next year.

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

Jelena Mrdjenovich vs. Melissa Hernandez III

Melissa Hernandez has traveled to Edmonton, Canada, to face local favorite Jelena Mrdjenovich three times. The first two times, Hernandez emerged victorious by decision.

Their third fight, in May, is the one that people will remember most.

The complexion of the bout changed as soon as their heads clashed in the second round. Mrdjenovich emerged with a nasty cut on her forehead, which painted the ring and the fighters crimson. The fight might've been stopped in some locales but not in Mrdjenovich's hometown. She was allowed to continue. And what had been a relatively civilized match between two fine boxers became an all-out brawl, the participants slugging it out in an effort to win rounds in the event Mrdjenovich's cut resulted in a truncated fight.

Finally, the bout was sent to the scorecards after the sixth round, with Mrdjenovich taking a close technical decision and the WBC featherweight title. Fourth fight anyone?

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

Diana Prazak vs. Frida Wallberg

The situation is reminiscent of the Nigel Benn-Gerald McClellan bout, where you want to celebrate a memorable fight but must hold back because of the loser's fate.

Diana Prazak's eighth-round knockout of the previously unbeaten Frida Wallberg for the WBC junior lightweight title is deserving of this award even though we sympathize with Wallberg, who will not fight again. A perfect left hook put her down, and soon after a second did the same to force an immediate stoppage.

Afterward, Wallberg was hospitalized and underwent surgery for a brain hemorrhage. She survived the ordeal and is currently in rehabilitation, keeping fans abreast of her progress on her Facebook page and on Twitter as she works toward a full recovery.

UPSET OF THE YEAR

Riyo Togo vs. Mariana Juarez

Mariana Juarez, one of the biggest names in the sport, was a considerable favorite heading into her fight against Riyo Togo in April. And she might have won had she not opted for a firefight with the hard-hitting Japanese fighter, who won the battle of left hooks with a flush shot to the jaw that sent Juarez to the canvas in the opening round. Juarez rose to her feet, but the bout was stopped immediately by referee Eddie Hernandez. Was it a quick hook? Definitely, but the result stood. An event a few months later eased the pain somewhat for Juarez: A handler of Togo allegedly was caught removing padding from her gloves immediately before she faced Juarez in a rematch, necessitating new gloves. Juarez won a unanimous decision. The incident raised the obvious question: Were Togo's gloves doctored in the first fight?

ROUND OF THE YEAR

Jelena Mrdjenovich vs. Melissa Hernandez III, Round 5

Countless fighters have been told during pivotal moments in a fight that it is now or never. Few respond. One who did was Jelena Mrdjenovich, who was informed by the ringside physician in her May bout against Melissa Hernandez that the cut on her forehead was so bad that she had only three minutes left to fight. And fight she did, scoring a knockdown (albeit a questionable one) that helped her earn a six-round technical decision over Hernandez.

The added ingredient that made this the Round of the Year is that Hernandez also fought as if she only had three minutes left, leaving it all out there in search of victory.

TRAINER OF THE YEAR
Lucia Rijker

Lucia Rijker, perhaps the greatest female to ever lace up the gloves, is building up quite a resume as a coach as well. Rijker's masterpiece has been the RING's No. 9 fighter, pound-for-pound, Diana Prazak of Australia. Adept at coaching both the physical and mental aspects of boxing, Rijker kept Prazak focused through some rough moments in her June title fight against unbeaten Frida Wallberg until Prazak scored an eighth-round knockout win to pick up the WBC junior lightweight crown. Rijker previously worked with French standout Myriam Lamare.

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR
Susi Kentikian

Germany's Susi Kentikian was written off by many after she lost her perfect record and three belts in back-to-back losses to Melissa McMorrow and Carina Moreno in 2012. But in 2013, the "Killer Queen" would rule once more, defeating Sanae Jah for the interim WBA flyweight title in February, avenging her loss to Moreno in July and finishing off the year with a clear-cut decision over Simona Galassi in December. Now that's one way to silence the critics.

PROSPECT OF THE YEAR
Celina Salazar

It's not unusual to see a woman with five to seven bouts fight for a world title because of the way women's boxing is structured. San Antonio's Celina Salazar is still a prospect but, with talent and a record 5-1-2, expect big things from the 25-year-old in 2014. She gave an impressive performance even though she lost a majority decision to the vastly more experienced Melinda Cooper in 2012. She followed that with an upset of former world champ Ana Julaton in 2013.

EVENT OF THE YEAR
Holly Holm retires

For the last several years in the United States, Holly Holm was women's boxing. The girl next door piled up win after win and title after title, most coming in the place where she was practically an industry unto herself – her hometown of Albuquerque, N.M. But after the Superfight that all fight fans wanted to see – Holm vs. pound-for-pound queen Cecilia Braekhus – didn't materialize, the 31-year-old stunned the boxing world by calling it quits to pursue a career in mixed martial arts. She never says never when it comes to a return to boxing but, with her MMA record currently sitting at 6-0, it doesn't seem likely anytime soon.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL
Rola El-Halabi

It was one of the most shocking stories in a sport known for them. In 2011, German up-and-comer Rola El-Halabi was shot three times by her stepfather while she prepared in her locker room for a title fight against Irma Adler. Initially confined to a wheelchair following the shooting, El-Halabi finally returned to the ring in 2013. She lost her comeback fight to Lucia Morelli in January but followed that with a victory over Dalia Vasarhelyi to win the vacant WBF junior welterweight crown in August. She then defended it with a sixth-round TKO of Sopo Putkaradze in September. RING

POUND FOR POUND

1. CECILIA BRAEKHUS, Norway
23-0 (7 KOs)
Welterweight

2. ANNE SOPHIE MATHIS, France
27-3 (23 KOs)
Junior middleweight

3. JELENA MRDJENOVICH, Canada
31-9-1 (16 KOS)
Featherweight

4. AVA KNIGHT, U.S.
12-2-3 (5 KOs)
Flyweight

5. YESICA YOLANDA BOPP, Argentina
26-1 (12 KOs),
Junior flyweight

6. ERICA ANABELLA FARIAS, Argentina
18-0 (9 KOs)
Lightweight

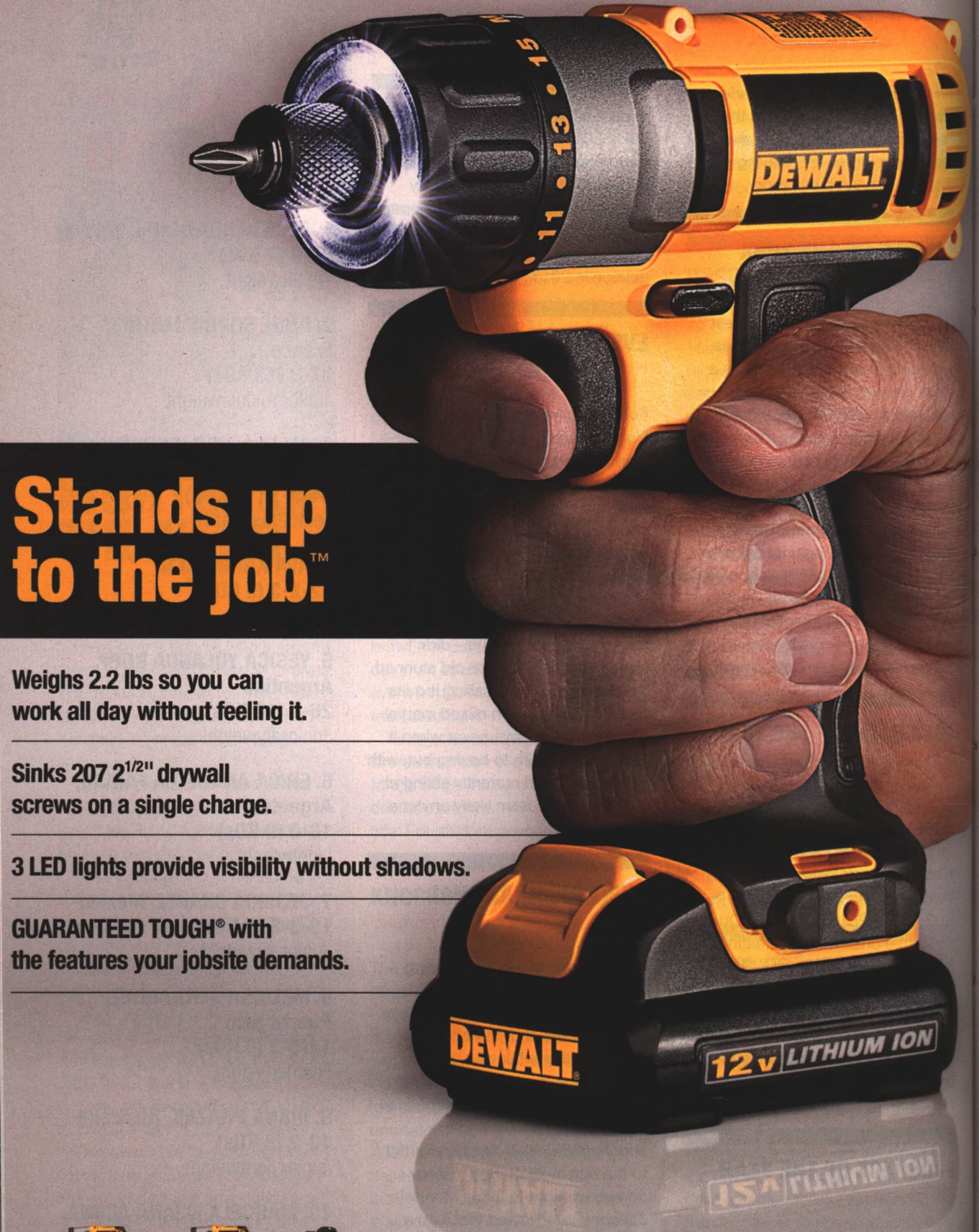
7. JESSICA CHAVEZ, Mexico
19-3-3 (4 KOs)
Junior flyweight

8. MELISSA HERNANDEZ, Puerto Rico
18-5-3 (6 KOs)
Featherweight

9. DIANA PRAZAK, Australia
12-2 (8 KOs)
Junior lightweight

10. MARCELA ELIANA ACUNA, Argentina
40-6-1 (17 KOs)
Junior featherweight

Through fights of Dec.15



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James Kirkland gave Glen Tapia a fearful beating in just another in a series of wild fights involving the slugging junior middleweight from Texas.

CHRIS FARINA / TOP RANK

JAMES KIRKLAND TKO 6 GLEN TAPIA

Date: Dec. 7
Site: Boardwalk Hall, Atlantic City, N.J.
Division: Junior middleweight
Weights: Kirkland 155.1 pounds; Tapia 156
RING rating (going into fight): Neither fighter rated
Network: HBO

★ There's a ragged double edge to James Kirkland's many demons. Turn them inward, and they're self-destructive. Turn them in the other direction, and they're frightening. When turned in Glen Tapia's direction, they were overwhelming in a fight that probably lasted at least a round too long.

Kirkland (32-1, 28 KOs) came back from a 20-month layoff with trainer Ann Wolfe back in his corner and his ferocity restored. For nearly six full rounds, Kirkland was the unstoppable force everybody remembered and feared. In the fourth round of sustained violence, he unleashed a storm of blows for which Tapia had no counter, from which he had no refuge. Kirkland landed 73 power shots, according to CompuBox, which called it a record round for the junior middleweight division.

Between the fourth and fifth, ringside physician Blair Bergen examined Tapia while his trainer, Alex Devia, told him to tell the doctor that he was fine. Referee Steve Smoger warned him that he'd end it if Kirkland continued to land head shots. But the bout continued for another three minutes, 38 seconds – through the fifth and into the sixth – before Smoger stopped it after Tapia took 24 punches in the opening moments of the sixth.

Tapia (20-1, 12 KOs) was taken to a trauma center at an Atlantic City hospital. According to his manager Pat Lynch, he was "doing fine" after undergoing a CT scan. The scan was "negative," according to Lynch.

"Thank God, he's safe, and he's fine, and he'll live to fight another day," Lynch told RingTV.com.

Early in the fifth, Tapia might have gained some extra time from Smoger with a couple of three-punch combinations and a hard left. But Tapia's momentary rally did nothing to slow down the incoming maelstrom that was Kirkland. Legitimate concern lingers about whether the sustained punishment left some permanent damage not evident in the CT scan.

"Kirkland's a beast when Kirkland's on," Lynch said.

But that "when" is a key qualifier. With Wolfe as his trainer, Kirkland looks to be unstoppable. Without her, he's just another junior middleweight. He says he wants to fight Canelo Alvarez. But his split with Golden Boy Promotions, which promotes Canelo, would seem to make that one impossible.

Miguel Cotto has been mentioned as an interesting possibility for Kirkland. But Cotto is in the final stage of his career. He's pondering bigger money against Sergio Martinez and/or Canelo. In Kirkland, there's just too much danger for anyone. •

BY NORM FRAUENHEIM

SHAWN PORTER UD 12 DEVON ALEXANDER

Date: Dec. 7
Site: Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Division: Welterweight
Weights: Porter 146.4 pounds; Alexander 146.8
RING rating (going into the fight): Alexander No. 5; Porter not rated.
Network: Showtime

★ It was a late shuffle: Shawn Porter instead of Amir Khan. It left Devon Alexander either unprepared or underwhelmed or maybe both.

Whatever it was, it dealt Alexander a loss that knocked him out of the Floyd Mayweather Jr. lottery. It will also force him to hit the restart button on a career that has fallen short of its advertised potential.

"I didn't do what I was supposed to do," a bloodied Alexander (25-2, 14 KOs) told ringside reporters. "I didn't follow the game plan."

Initially, the plan had been Khan. But Khan withdrew because of the chance at big money in the third fight of Mayweather's Showtime contract. With Khan out, Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer turned to Porter. It made sense. Porter and Alexander were amateur rivals. They fought each other as 8-year-olds at the Ohio State Fair in the 1990s. Alexander won. But there would be no encore 18 years later.

Shawn Porter became a major beltholder for the first time on Dec. 7.

Far from it.

"We made it look easy," said Porter (23-0-1, 14 KOs), who won a unanimous decision, 116-112, 116-112, and 115-113 in Alexander's second defense of the IBF title. "This is a blessing. I think I was able to control the fight with my experience and because I'm the bigger guy."

As it turned out, the only thing Porter didn't possess was Alexander's name. He was the lesser-known fighter, but maybe the more tested one. Porter was Manny Pacquiao's sparring partner before the Filipino's victories over Miguel Cotto and Shane Mosley. He had worked in gyms full of fighters who had an idea or two on how to beat Alexander.

Porter put pressure on Alexander, roughing him up. The slick Alexander wilted under the bruising assault. In part, Porter borrowed the tactic from Timothy Bradley, who beat Alexander in 2011 in Detroit.

"I actually talked to Timothy Bradley," said Porter, who cut Alexander above one eye with a Bradley-like head butt.

In the end, the roughhouse tactics never allowed Alexander to develop any kind of rhythm. He was tentative from the beginning.

Starting over for Alexander probably means a fight or two that would put him in position for a rematch with Porter. Meanwhile, Porter faces a mandatory against unbeaten Kell Brook (31-0, 21 KOs), a U.K. welterweight who is No. 4 in THE RING's 147-pound ratings.

"The timing is right," Porter said. "It's perfect, actually."

For Alexander, perfectly wrong. •

Marcos Maidana (left) wasn't willing to be a stepping stone for Adrien Broner.

MARCOS MAIDANA UD 12 ADRIEN BRONER

Date: Dec. 14
Site: Alamodome, San Antonio
Division: Welterweight
Weights: Maidana 146.2 pounds; Broner 144.4
RING rating (going into the fight): Maidana not rated; Broner No. 6
Network: Showtime

★ On Adrien Broner's stage, everybody is treated like a prop. But Marcos Maidana wouldn't play the role. He wouldn't allow himself to be flushed. Maidana turned a self-proclaimed heir apparent into a pretender. The man who would be Floyd Mayweather Jr. looked a lot like Victor Ortiz in a huge upset as wild as it was convincing.

Broner's thespian skills had persuaded just about everybody that the Maidana bout would be just another triumphant moment in his parade to succeeding Mayweather. Broner sang and smiled in the walk to the ring. He wore a robe and trunks that gave his initials, AB, a new wrinkle. In sequins, it said: About Billions. But the billions looked counterfeit.

Maidana dominated with his trademark power, but also with a new element of poise and pace. Broner, flat-footed in only his second bout at welterweight, never seized any momentum, mostly because he never could adjust to a crushing left hand that scored two knockdowns.

Maidana's victory by unanimous decision ranks as the biggest upset in 2013. In hindsight, however, it probably shouldn't have been such a surprise. Paulie Malignaggi's loss to Broner by split decision on June 22 was a warning. It had shown that Broner (27-1, 22 KOs) wasn't all he claimed to be. Malignaggi lacked the power to capitalize on Broner's flaws. But Maidana (35-3, 31 KOs), who kept himself in the Mayweather conversation, had it from the first round through the 12th.

"I showed a lot of heart," said Maidana, a quiet fighter from Argentina who fought with an urgency, almost as if he knew his career was facing a last stand in an arena named for a famous one.

He rocked Broner in the first round. He knocked him down in the second and again in a crazy eighth. Maidana was penalized a point in the eighth when he drove his head into Broner's chin during a clinch. Broner rolled around as if he were in pain, although there was skepticism about whether Broner was acting. At that point, his chances at victory had begun to slip away. Sympathy was about the only thing he could win.

Skepticism turned into controversy when Broner landed a left after the bell ended the 11th round. Maidana was clearly dazed. The ringside physician looked at him. Then Maidana went to his corner. What happened next depends on what you see, or don't see, on the video. Strength and conditioning coach Alex Ariza, a leading candidate for boxing's most controversial person in 2013, presses some white wraps onto Maidana's nose. The internet filled up with allegations that the wraps included smelling salts or some other illegal substance. Ariza said he wanted Maidana to blow his nose.

Only one thing is certain: He wasn't going to blow the fight. •

BY NORM FRAUENHEIM

NO. 2 SERGEY KOVALEV KO 2 ISMAYL SILLAKH

Nov. 30, Quebec City, Canada (HBO)

★ Have trouble sleeping? Fight Sergey Kovalev. The beastly Russian has perfected the art of sending his opponents to dreamland.

Kovalev (23-0-1, 21 KOs) needed only 3:52 to destroy the talented Ismayl Sillakh (21-2, 17 KOs) on the Adonis Stevenson-Tony Bellew card at the Colisee de Quebec. He put Sillakh down with a right to the head in the second round, hurting him badly. The Ukrainian got up on shaky legs but went down again from a right-left combination, which left him unable to continue.

Kovalev stopped all four of his opponents in 2013, none lasting beyond the fourth round. Twenty of his 21 KO victims never saw the fifth.

The WBO light heavyweight titleholder, who lives in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., entered the year as a contender. He begins 2014 as the best 175-pounder in the world, according to many knowledgeable observers.

CHAMPION ADONIS STEVENSON KO 6 NO. 6 TONY BELLEW

Nov. 30, Quebec City, Canada (HBO)

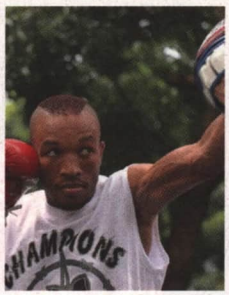
★ Adonis Stevenson culminated a remarkable 2013 the only way he knows how – with a knockout.

THE RING light heavyweight champ knocked down Tony Bellew (20-2-1, 12 KOs) with a straight left to the jaw in the sixth round. Bellew got up but seconds later had his brain rattled by another left, followed by a short barrage with his back to the ropes, and the fight was stopped.

Bellew, who is normally aggressive, fought tentatively this time. And who could blame him? Stevenson (23-1, 20 KOs) is a terror on a roll.

Like Kovalev, the Haiti-born Canadian stopped all four of his opponents in 2013. That included a career-changing one-punch, first-round knockout of Chad Dawson to win the RING title in June.

After the Bellew fight, the boxing world clamored for a showdown between Stevenson and Kovalev. The winner would become a major star.



SIMPIWE VETYEKA KO 6 NO. 1 CHRIS JOHN

Dec. 6, Perth, Australia

★ Simpiwe Vetyeka found a way to honor his countryman and hero, Nelson Mandela, the South African leader who died at 95 the day before Vetyeka fought Chris John. In the process, he stunned the boxing world.

Vetyeka (26-2, 16 KOs) battered John mercilessly in the fifth and final rounds, forcing the 34-year-old Indonesian hero to quit on his stool before the start of Round 7. The South African had put John down once in the fifth and twice more in the sixth, although the referee ruled only one an official knockdown.

John (48-1-3, 22 KOs) had gone 51 fights and more than 15 years without a loss and was making the 19th defense of the WBA featherweight title he won in 2004.

And lest you think that it was a fluke, Vetyeka also defeated talented Indonesian Daud Yordan by a clear decision in his previous fight in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia.

Vetyeka reportedly said he's willing to honor a rematch clause in the contract by fighting John again, possibly in Indonesia. In light of his fate on Dec. 6, John might not like that idea.

CHAMPION AKIRA YAEGASHI UD 12 NO. 4 EDGAR SOSA

Dec. 6, Tokyo

★ Matchups of quick, talented athletes and slower tough guys often favor the former.

That was the case when RING and WBC flyweight titleholder Akira Yaegashi of Japan defended his belts against Mexican Edgar Sosa, who simply couldn't catch the champion to hit him with the consistency required to win the fight.

Yaegashi (19-3, 9 KOs) engaged Sosa in the final rounds but by then had built a considerable lead. The final scores were 116-112, 117-111 and 117-111, all for Yaegashi, who was making the second defense of the titles he took from Toshiyuki Igarashi in April 2013.

Yaegashi has won four consecutive fights since losing his strawweight title to Kazuto Ioka in June 2012.

Sosa (49-8, 29 KOs) had considerable momentum going into the title challenge, having beaten tough countrymen Ulises Solis and Giovani Segura in consecutive fights.

NO. 9 PAULIE MALIGNAGGI UD 12 ZAB JUDAH

Dec. 7, Brooklyn, N.Y. (Showtime)

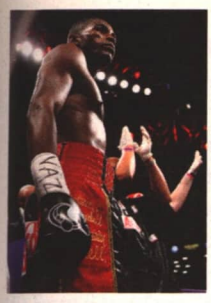
★ Any thought of retirement took a beating. So did Zab Judah.

Paulie Malignaggi added life and perhaps a lot of money to his career with a surprisingly one-sided decision over a shopworn Zab Judah for Brooklyn's bragging rights at Barclays Center.

"This allows me to continue," Malignaggi (33-5, 7 KOs) told ringside reporters after he out-thought and out-fought Judah (42-9, 29 KOs) in scoring a 116-111, 117-110 and 117-110 decision. "With a loss, I don't know if I would have wanted to continue. This big win puts me in the right spot in the talented welterweight division with a lot of money."

Despite scoring a second-round knockdown with a left, Judah appeared sluggish throughout a bout often booed by a crowd of 9,363.

"It just wasn't there," said Judah, who after an 18-year career didn't seem to know where to go next.



NO. 4 ERISLANDY LARA UD 12 NO. 2 AUSTIN TROUT

Dec. 7, Brooklyn, N.Y. (Showtime)

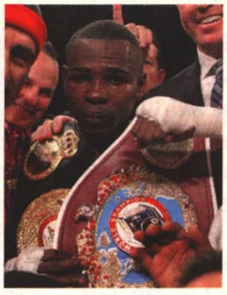
★ Take two lefthanders, put them in the same ring and wait for the boos.

That old recipe played out all over again in Erislandy Lara's dull, yet dominant decision over Austin Trout in a junior middleweight bout on the Paulie Malignaggi-Zab Judah card at Barclays Center.

Lara (19-1-2, 12 KOs) landed most of the punches, controlled the tempo and even scored a knockdown in the 11th. He did just about everything but excite in handing Trout (26-2, 14 KOs) a second successive loss. By the eighth round, it was virtually over. Trout didn't possess enough power to alter a result dictated by Lara's lead on the cards.

"What got him tonight was the Cuban school," said Lara, one of great Cuban Olympians. "I gave him a lesson in Cuban boxing."

But not a lesson that entertains.



CHAMPION GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX UD 12 JOSEPH AGBEKO

Dec. 7, Atlantic City, N.J. (HBO)

★ The debate after Guillermo Rigondeaux fought Joseph Agbeko at Boardwalk Hall was based on whether it's enjoyable to watch the Cuban technician. No one questions his phenomenal ability.

The RING junior featherweight champ was too fast, too powerful and much too good for his South African opponent, winning every round on all three scorecards.

Rigondeaux (13-0, 8 KOs) picked Agbeko apart from a distance with quick, hard punches that took the will of the former bantamweight titleholder, who was more focused on surviving than trying to win the fight.

Agbeko (29-5, 22 KOs) landed 48 punches in the fight, an average of four per round.

The numbers that worked against Rigondeaux were TV ratings. More people watched James Kirkland-Glen Tapia on the undercard, and Paulie Malignaggi-Zab Judah on rival Showtime than Rigondeaux-Agbeko, according to a Yahoo! Sports report.

Rigondeaux is great. Whether he's great to watch is in the eye of the beholder.

NO. 5 FELIX STURM TKO 2 NO. 2 DARREN BARKER

Dec. 7, Stuttgart, Germany

★ Felix Sturm and Darren Barker seemed to have headed in opposite directions at Porsche Arena.

Sturm, dismissed by many as a has-been after struggling in a number of fights between 2011 and early 2013, whacked Barker out in only 5 minutes, 9 seconds of action to win the IBF middleweight title – his fourth 160-pound belt – and remain a major player in the division.

Sturm (39-3-2, 18 KOs) became the first German to win four world titles.

Meanwhile, Barker (26-2, 16 KOs), making his first defense after so gallantly taking the title from Daniel Geale four months earlier, dislocated a hip in the fight and might have to retire. The 31-year-old Briton already had had two hip-replacement operations.

Sturm put Barker down twice in the second round. While on the canvas the second time, Barker pointed to his hip and shook his head to indicate he could no longer fight. He got up and exchanged a few punches but his corner soon threw in the towel.

NO. 9 KEITH THURMAN TKO 9 JESUS SOTO KARASS

Dec. 14, San Antonio (Showtime)

★ Keith Thurman wanted to fight Adrien Broner. But what about Marcos Maidana? Thurman-Maidana suddenly became an intriguing possibility because of what happened at the Alamodome.

First, there was Thurman's dramatic stoppage of Jesus Soto Karass. Then, there was Maidana's upset of Broner. The forthright Thurman (22-0 20 KOs) calls himself "One Time." It's supposed to be a promise. It's what he intends to do to the other guy.

One time early in the first round, however, it almost happened to him. Soto Karass (28-9-3, 18 KOs), Antonio Margarito's old sparring partner, hurt him with a winging right. Thurman was quick to recover. He landed a left for a knockdown in the sixth and scored a wicked stoppage at 2:21 of the ninth for a victory that kept him among the contenders in a shuffled division.

NO. 3 LEO SANTA CRUZ UD 12 CESAR SEDA

Dec. 14, San Antonio (Showtime)

★ Leo Santa Cruz doesn't give his opponents an opportunity to breathe, which leaves them little chance of beating him.

The victim this time was the talented Cesar Seda, who had the athleticism and skills to compete with the WBA junior featherweight titleholder but was smothered by relentless pressure on the Marcos Maidana-Adrien Broner undercard.

Santa Cruz (26-0-1, 15 KOs) threw 829 punches, a slow night for him but more than enough to keep the naturally smaller Seda (25-2, 17 KOs) on the defensive and retain his title by scores of 117-110, 116-111 and 115-112.

The titleholder said afterward that his sights are set on undefeated contender Carl Frampton of Northern Ireland. Santa Cruz also suggested he would consider moving up in weight.

FIGHT RESULTS

THROUGH FIGHTS OF DEC. 15 (CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Kyotaro Fujimoto UD 10 Kotatsu Takehara
Antonio Tarver TKO 4 Mike Sheppard
Luis Ortiz KO 1 Alex Gonzales
Travis Kauffman TKO 1 Jason Barnett
Dereck Chisora TKO 3 Ondrej Pala
Alexander Flores KO 8 Arron Lyons
Francesco Pianeta TKO 2 Robert Teuber
Kubrat Pulev TKO 5 Joey Abell
Brian Minto TKO 7 Shane Cameron
Amir Mansour TKO 7 Kelvin Price
Steve Cunningham UD 8 Manuel Quezada
Darnell Wilson KO 6 David Rodriguez

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Tamas Lodi KO 11 Janne Forsman
Dmitry Kudryashov KO 1 Zack Mwekassa
Kai Kurzawa UD 10 Marcel Gottschalk
Krzysztof Wlodarczyk TKO 6 Giacobbe Fragomeni
Maurizio Lovaglio TKO 10 Leonardo Bruzzese
Murat Gassiev UD 10 Ivica Bacurin
Krzysztof Glowacki TKO 9 Varol Vekiloglu

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Thomas Williams Jr. UD 10 Yusaf Mack
Johnny Muller TKO 2 Vhonani Netshidamboni
Ryno Liebenberg TKO 1 Daniel Allotey
Nadjib Mohammedi TKO 6 Oleksandr Cherviak
Sergey Kovalev KO 2 Ismayl Sillakh
Adonis Stevenson TKO 6 Tony Bellew
Maxim Vlasov KO 4 Maxell Taylor
Pawel Glazewski UD 8 Andrei Salakhutdzinau
Andrzej Fonfara KO 2 Samuel Miller
Timy Shala TKO 9 Mounir Toumi
Enzo Maccarinelli TKO 7 Courtney Fry
Juergen Braehmer UD 12 Marcus Oliveira
Lionell Thompson UD 10 Ryan Coyne
Beibut Shumenov TKO 3 Tamas Kovacs

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Zac Dunn TKO 5 Marlon Alta
(F) Nikki Adler UD 10 Zane Brige
Frank Buglioni Stepan Horvath
Jeff Lacy TKO 3 Martin Verdin
J'Leon Love KO 6 Lajuan Simon
Badou Jack TKO 6 Rogelio Medina
Julius Jackson TKO 9 Nicolas Dario Lopez
Kelvin Young UD 10 Alexey Ribchev
Sakio Bika D 12 Anthony Dirrell
Yuzo Kiyota TKO 4 Shintaro Matsumoto
Jermain Taylor KO 7 Juan Carlos Candelo

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Bronco McKart TKO 5 Miguel Munguia
Jorge Heiland KO 12 Billi Godoy
David Lemieux TKO 7 Jose Miguel Torres
(F) Christina Hammer TKO 1 Carmen Garcia
Ryota Murata TKO 8 Dave Peterson
Felix Sturm TKO 2 Darren Barker
Matt Korobov TKO 9 Derek Edwards
Matthew Macklin UD 10 Lamar Russ
Sam Soliman TKO 9 Les Sherrington
Jake Carr TKO 6 Zac Awad
Gunnar Jackson TKO 2 Opeti Tagi
Hassan N'Dam N'Jikam UD 10 Anthony Fitzgerald

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Anthony Mundine TKO 6 Shane Mosley
Tony Harrison TKO 2 Donald Ward
Kanat Islam KO 3 Emilio Julio
Tadashi Yuba SD 10 Yoshihisa Tonimura
Brandon Cook TKO 5 Luca Michael Pasqua
Nick Klappert TKO 7 Idiozan Matos
Salim Larbi TKO 2 Patrice Sou Toke
Francisco Santana UD 10 Joachim Alcine
John Jackson TKO 8 Jorge Daniel Miranda
Liam Smith TKO 4 Mark Thompson
Joe Selkirk TKO 3 Zoltan Sera
James Kirkland TKO 6 Glen Tapia
Julian Williams TKO 3 Orlando Lora
Erislandy Lara UD 12 Austin Trout
Hugo Centeno Jr. TKO 9 Angel Osuna
Jack Culcay UD 12 Dieudonne Belinga
Isaac Real TKO 7 Ivan Sanchez

WELTERWEIGHTS

Ricardo Villalba TKO 8 Cesar Velez
Jo Jo Dan SD 12 Kevin Bizier
Ahmed El Mousaoui SD 10 Frank Horta
Jorge Paez Jr. TKO 7 Ivan Hernandez
Thomas Dulorme UD 10 Hector Velazquez
Bradley Skeete UD 10 Colin Lynes
Gianluca Frezza UD 10 Giovanni D'Antoni
Yoshihiro Kamegai TKO 5 Tim Hunt
Sadam Ali TKO 6 Jesus Selig
Paulie Malignaggi UD 12 Zab Judah
Shawn Porter UD 12 Devon Alexander
Sirimongkol Singwancha KO 1 Giovani Rota
Josesito Lopez TD 8 Mike Arnaoutis
Frankie Gomez TKO 1 Prince Doku Jr.
Ceferino Rodriguez UD 12 Daniel Rasilla
Leonard Bundu TKO 12 Lee Purdy
Keith Thurman TKO 9 Jesus Soto Karass
Marcos Maidana UD 12 Adrien Broner

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Erick Bone UD 10 Aaron Dominguez
Chaquib Fadli TKO 7 Bastien Laforge
Azad Azizov UD 12 Philipp Schuster
Jason Pagara UD 10 Vladimir Baez
Johan Perez MD 12 Paul Spadafora
Rey Labao SD 10 Daiki Koide
Keita Obara TKO 9 Tetsuya Hasunuma
(F) Fernanda Alegre TKO 5 Darys Pardo
Antonio Lozada Jr. D 10 Ramiro Alcaraz
Daniel Estrada TKO 3 Hugo Armenta
Sergio Thompson KO 1 Cesar Chavez
Anton Novikov UD 10 Manuel Perez
Felix Lora SD 12 Sergei Fedchenko
Ricardo Alvarez MD 10 Rod Salka

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Josh King UD 12 Chaiyong Sithsaithong
Javier Prieto UD 12 Vicente Mosquera
Pablo Barboza MD 10 Ezequiel Fernandez
Daud Yordan SD 12 Sipho Taliwe
Mickey Bey TKO 3 Carlos Cardenas
Edis Tatli UD 12 Mzonke Fana
Stephen Ormond UD 10 Derry Mathews
(F) Delfine Persoon TKO 10 Lucia Morelli
Thompson Mokwana TKO 7 Irvin Buhlalu
Daniel Ruiz TKO 6 Jamie Kavanagh
Kevin Mitchell TKO 9 Karim El Ouazghari

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Ryan Sermona KO 5 Matt Garlett
(F) Ramona Kuehne TKO 6 Renata Domsodi
Fernando Saucedo UD 10 John Carlo Aparicio
Michael Farenas TKO 2 Jesus Rios
Francisco Vargas UD 10 Jerry Belmontes

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Celestino Caballero TKO 2 Jimmy Aburto
AJ Banal UD 10 Manuel Gonzalez Garcia
Gottlieb Ndokosho TKO 7 Kakhaber Avetisian
Simpiwe Vetyeka TKO 6 Chris John
Albert Pagara UD 10 Gadwin Tubigon
(F) Edith Matthysse UD 10 Ogleidis Suarez
Lusanda Komanisi TKO 6 Aphiwe Mboyiya
Cristian Mijares KO 3 Jovanny Soto
Rogelio Jun Doliguez TKO 9 Maxsaisai Sithsaithong
Gamalier Rodriguez TKO 8 Aldimar Silva Santos

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Luis Del Valle TKO 4 Juan Beltran
Hugo Cazares MD 12 Julio Cesar Miranda
Guillermo Rigondeaux UD 12 Joseph Agbeko
(F) Yesica Marcos UD 10 Angela Marciales
Dodie Boy Penalosa Jr. TD 7 Alem Robles
JR Magboo TKO 3 Danilo Pena
Rey Perez UD 10 Nino Val Falcunaya
Leo Santa Cruz UD 12 Cesar Seda

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Randy Caballero TKO 7 Jessy Cruz
Kohei Oba TKO 4 Yuji Hasegawa
Panomroonglek Kaiyanghadaogym KO 2 Vicky Vebrian
(F) Janeth Perez SD 10 Galina Ivanova
Tomoki Kameda UD 12 Immanuel Naidjala
Omar Lamiri MD 10 Hassan Azaouagh
Ryosuke Iwasa TKO 5 Hiroki Shiino
Martin Ward UD 12 Gabriel Odoi Laryea
(F) Carolina Duer UD 10 Estrella Valverde
Pungluang Sor Singyu TKO 3 Romnick Magos

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Zolani Tete KO 10 Juan Carlos Sanchez Jr.
(F) Zulina Munoz DQ 8 Marisa Portillo
Liborio Solis SD 12 Daiki Kameda
Jaymart Toyco TKO 7 Juren Labordo
Paul Butler UD 12 Ruben Montoya
Bruno Escalante MD 10 Michael Ruiz Jr.
Ivan Morales KO 2 Manuel Jimenez

FLYWEIGHTS

Yodmongkol Vor Saengthep TKO 12 Koki Eto
Milan Melindo UD 12 Jose Alfredo Rodriguez
Cris Paulino UD 10 Renren Tesorio
Akira Yaegashi UD 12 Edgar Sosa
(F) Eva Voraberger KO 1 Fleis Djendji
Thomas Masson UD 10 Redouane Asloum
(F) Susi Kentikian UD 10 Simona Galassi
Suguru Muranaka SD 10 Takuya Kogawa

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Pedro Guevara TKO 3 Ivan Meneses
Donnie Nietes KO 3 Sammy Gutierrez
(F) Yesica Yolanda Bopp TKO 2 Ana Fernandez
Naoya Inoue TKO 5 Jerson Mancio

STRAWWEIGHTS

(F) Nancy Franco UD 10 Kayoko Ebata
(F atomweight) Ayaka Miyao UD 10 Gretchen Abaniel
Xiong Zhao Zhong TKO 5 Lookrak Kiatmungmee
Byron Rojas UD 10 Jose Aguilar
Merlito Sabillo D 12 Carlos Buitrago
Katsunari Takayama UD 12 Vergilio Silvano
(F) Mari Ando SD 10 Jasseth Noriega

COMING UP

WBO junior lightweight titleholder Mikey Garcia (left) faces Juan Carlos Burgos on Jan. 25 in New York City.

PREDICTIONS ARE MADE BY RING STAFF MEMBERS MICHAEL ROSENTHAL, DOUG FISCHER AND LEM SATTERFIELD.

JANUARY

MIKEY GARCIA vs. JUAN CARLOS BURGOS

Date: Jan. 25
Location: Madison Square Garden Theater, New York City
Division: Junior lightweights (for Garcia's WBO title)
TV: HBO
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★★
Also fighting: Bryant Jennings vs. Artur Szpilka, heavyweights.
Significance: Garcia (33-0, 28 KOs) continued his blazing-hot streak by stopping Rocky Martinez in eight rounds to win the 130-pound title in November, making him a two-division titleholder. Burgos (30-1-2, 20 KOs) drew with Martinez in a fight many believed he won in January 2013.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Garcia KO 9; Fischer – Garcia KO 10; Satterfield – Garcia UD 12.

LAMONT PETERSON vs. DIERRY JEAN

Date: Jan. 25
Location: DC Armory, Washington, D.C.
Division: Junior welterweights (for Peterson's IBF title)
TV: Showtime
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★
Also fighting: Jermell Charlo vs. Gabriel Rosado, junior middleweights
Significance: Peterson (31-2-1, 16 KOs) will defend his title but is in rebuilding mode after he was brutally KO'd by Lucas Matthysse in an over-the-weight bout in May. Jean (25-0, 17 KOs) is unbeaten and talented but is moving up in class to face Peterson, who will be fighting at home.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Peterson UD; Fischer – Peterson UD; Satterfield – Peterson SD.

MARCO HUCK vs. FIRAT ARSLAN

Date: Jan. 25
Location: Hanns-Martin-Schleyer Halle, Stuttgart, Germany
Division: Cruiserweights (for Huck's WBO title)
TV: None in U.S.
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★
Significance: Huck (36-2-1, 25 KOs) is 2-0 since losing to Alexander Povetkin and drawing with Ola Afolabi. That includes competitive decisions over Arslan (in November 2012) and in a rematch with Afolabi. Arslan (33-6-2, 21 KOs) has been a contender since 2005.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Huck UD; Fischer – Huck UD; Satterfield – Huck KO 10.

VICTOR ORTIZ vs. LUIS COLLAZO

Date: Jan. 30
Location: Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.y.
Division: Welterweights
TV: Fox Sports 1
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★
Also fighting: Eddie Gomez vs. Daquan Arnett, junior middleweights
Significance: Ortiz (29-4-2, 22 KOs) will have been out of the ring for 19 months after back-to-back losses to Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Josesito Lopez, as well as an appearance on *Dancing with the Stars*. Collazo (34-5, 17 KOs) also is rebuilding his career after two long layoffs.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Ortiz KO 9; Fischer – Draw; Satterfield – Collazo SD.

JAN. 24 – Javier Molina vs. Kendall Holt, welterweights, Shelton, Wash. (ESPN2)

JAN. 24 – Curtis Stevens vs. Patrick Majewski, middleweights, Atlantic City, N.J. (NBC Sports Net)

JAN. 24 – Cornelius Bundrage vs. Joey Hernandez, junior middleweights, Indio, Calif. (Fox Sports 1)

JAN. 31 – Zsolt Erdei vs. Elvir Muriqi, light heavyweights, West Orange, N.J. (ESPN2)

FEBRUARY

GENNADY GOLOVKIN vs. OSUMANU ADAMA

Date: Feb. 1
Location: Salle des etoiles, Monte Carlo, Monaco
Division: Middleweights (for Golovkin's WBA title)
TV: None in U.S. (at press time)
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★★
Also fighting: Martin Murray vs. Jarrod Fletcher, middleweights; Ilunga Makabu vs. Pawel Kolodziej, cruiserweights
Significance: Golovkin (28-0, 25 KOS) has knocked out his last 15 opponents even as he has faced better and better opposition. Adama (22-3, 16 KOs) is a good boxer with some power but he has struggled against big-name opponents, including Daniel Geale (UD 12) in 2012.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Golovkin KO 6; Fischer – Golovkin KO 6; Satterfield – Golovkin KO 5.

JHONNY GONZALEZ vs. ABNER MARES II

Date: Feb. 15

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles

Division: Featherweights (for Gonzalez's WBC title)

TV: Showtime

Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★★

Significance: Gonzalez (55-8, 47 KOs), an enormous puncher, stunned the boxing world when he KO'd Mares in the first round to win the title in August. Mares (26-1-1, 14 KOs) had survived a gauntlet of big-name foes to climb onto to some pound-for-pound lists before the Gonzalez fight.

Prediction: Rosenthal – Mares KO 9; Fischer – Mares KO 10; Satterfield – Mares UD 12.

FEB. 1 – Lee Selby vs. Rendall Munroe, featherweights (for the vacant European title), Cardiff, Wales

FEB. 15 – Dereck Chisora vs. TBA (at press time), heavyweights (for Chisora's European title), London

FEB. 15 – Billy Joe Saunders vs. TBA (at press time), middleweights (for Saunders' European and Commonwealth titles), London

FEB. 15 – Nathan Cleverly vs. Daniel Ammann, cruiserweights (for the vacant Commonwealth title), London

FEB. 21 – Chris Algieri vs. Emmanuel Taylor, junior welterweights, Huntington, N.Y. (ESPN2)

FEB. 22 – Miguel Vazquez vs. Denis Shafikov, lightweights (for Vazquez's IBF title), Macau, China (HBO2)

FEB. 22 – Simpiwe Vetyeka vs. Akifumi Shimoda, featherweights (for Vetyeka's WBA title, Macau, China

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— BOC Member José Chegüi Torres

BREAKTHROUGH

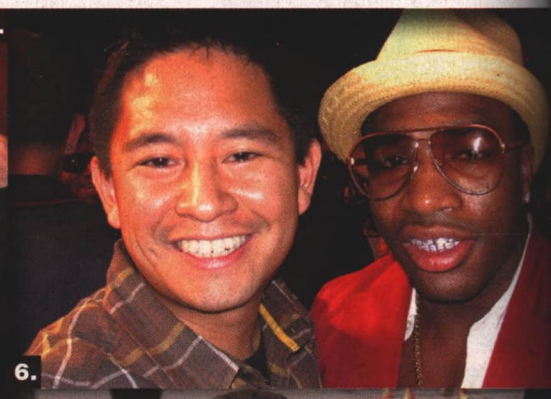
One of Sugar Ray Leonard's greatest performances was his 15th-round TKO of then-RING and WBC welterweight titleholder Wilfred Benitez on Nov. 30, 1979, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Leonard's once-in-a-generation talent was obvious but he had never faced a fighter as respected as Benitez, a boxing wizard who was undefeated in 39 fights. Leonard proved to be the better man, controlling the fight and putting the Puerto Rican down twice. The second knockdown (pictured here) came in the final seconds of the fight. Referee Carlos Padilla ended matters with only six ticks to go when Benitez failed to respond to a flurry of punches. Leonard had his first major titles, Benitez his first loss. Afterward, Benitez said simply and graciously: "Sugar Ray is the best in the world now." No one would've argued with him.

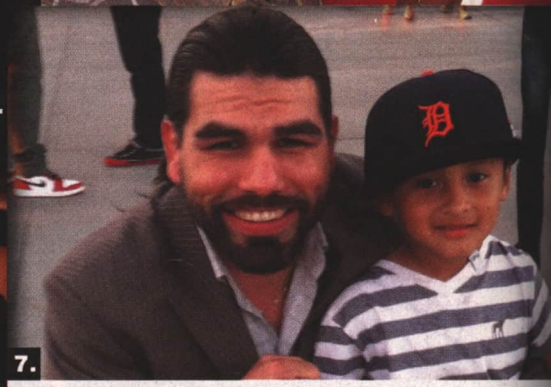
THE RING will select a photo from its vast archive each month to publish in the magazine. For more archive photos, go to our website — RingTV.com — or scan the QR code.

Corona Extra BOXING

AT THE FIGHTS

1. Mindy Gbriel (left) with Gabriel Rosado at the Paulie Malignaggi-Zab Judah fight Dec. 7 in Brooklyn, N.Y. **2.** Michael Ramirez Jr. (left) with Austin Trout at a recent San Antonio Spurs game. **3.** Ray Soto (left) with Julio Cesar Chavez at the Mikey Garcia-Rocky Martinez weigh-in Nov. 8 in Corpus Christi, Texas. **4.** Left to right, Jose Villarruel, Hall of Fame referee Joe Cortez, Reymundo Villarruel and Ramon Villarruel. **5.** Mike Sabato (right) with Sergey Kovalev at the Gennady Golovkin-Curtis Stevens fight Nov. 2 in New York City. **6.** George Velasco (left) with Adrien Broner at the Lucas Matthysse-Lamont Peterson fight on May 18 in Atlantic City, N.J. **7.** Evan Nahuat (right) with Alfredo Angulo at the Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.-Bryan Vera fight Sept. 28 in Carson, Calif.





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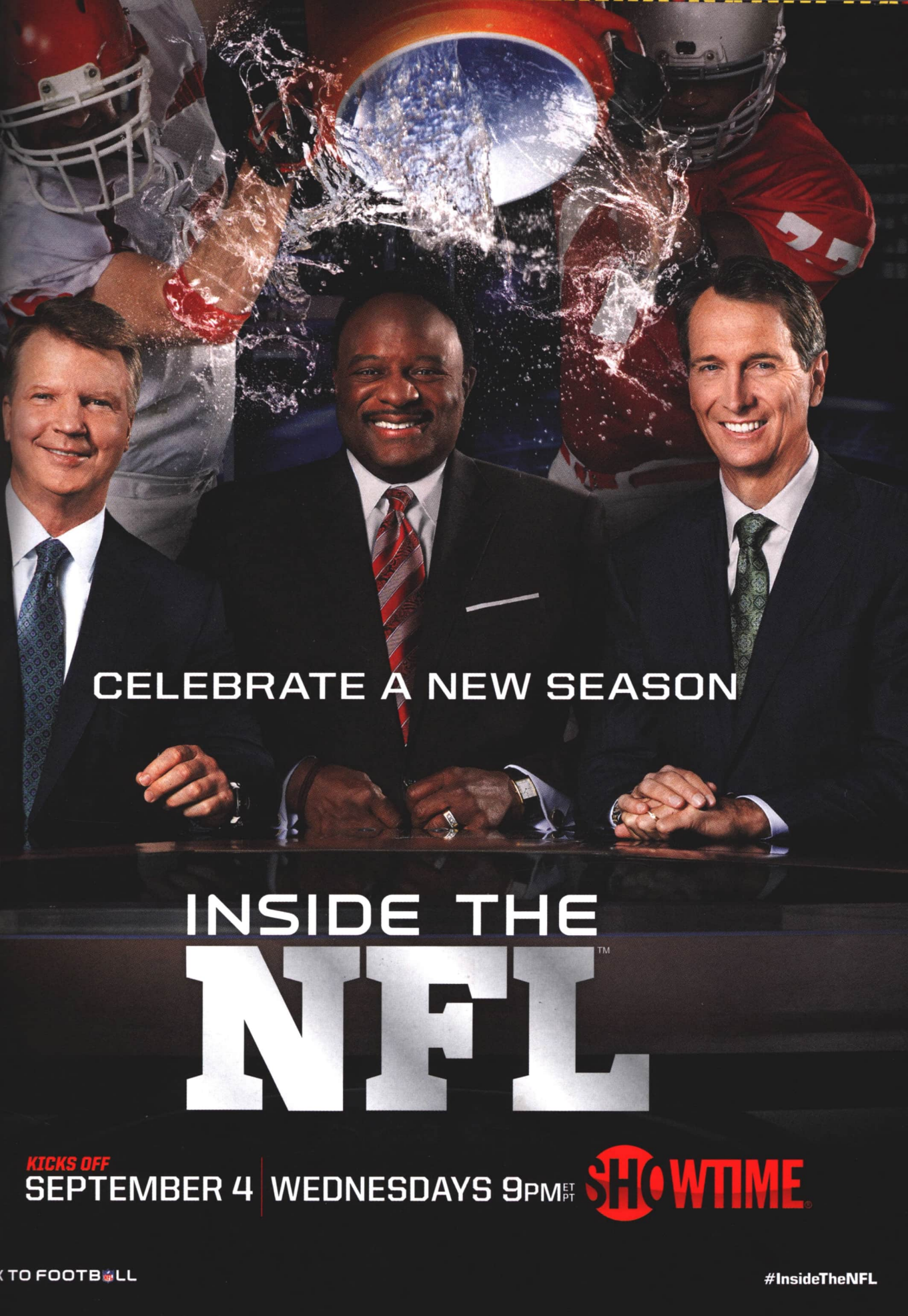
Send us your photos from a fight with you posing next to a celebrity, athlete, or other famous person and we will consider it for publication in the magazine. Send photos to **celebrityphotos@sepublications.com.** Make sure to include your name(s), celebrity name(s), the fight attended, and your contact information. See you at the fights!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